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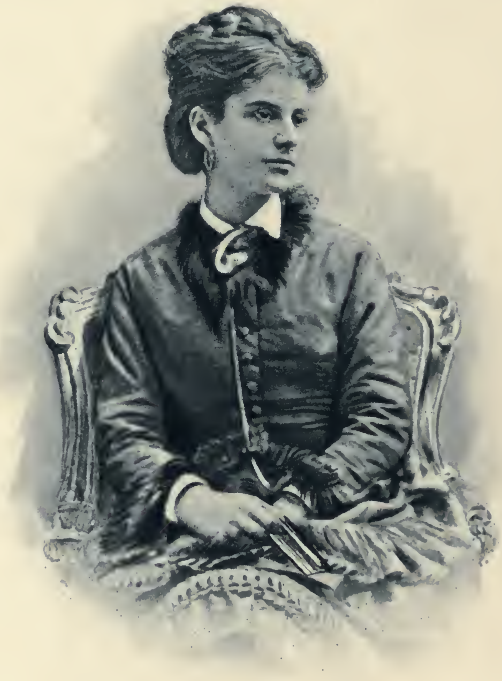
LIFE OF LAURENCE OLIPHANT



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Alice Oliphant

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MEMOIR

OF THE

LIFE OF LAURENCE OLIPHANT

AND OF

ALICE OLIPHANT, HIS WIFE

BY

MARGARET OLIPHANT W. OLIPHANT

IN TWO VOLUMES

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MEMOIR

OF THE

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE NEW LIFE.

THAT hand was now found. I cannot tell with any precision at what time Lady Oliphant and her son[1] were first attracted by the preaching of an obscure American, who lectured in Steinway Hall and other such places, to a few earnest disciples and a number of curious chance hearers, more or less moved by the unusual character of the man and his utterances; nor do I know whether it was Laurence or his mother who was the first to be moved. The probabilities would seem to be that it was Lady Oliphant who was most likely to betake herself to an out-of-the-way place, and a teacher who never touched the sphere of fashion, or became a public celebrity, for spiritual instruction. So far as I know, the public interest was never roused, as it often is by much less notable appearances, and the man and all about him remained always shrouded in a certain mystery—cleverly shrouded, I should say, if I could believe, what is the general opinion, that he was from the beginning an impostor, with a scheme concocted of profit to himself from the empire he acquired over his followers. I am myself very slow to believe in systematic imposture, and think it very unlikely to affect seriously any man or woman with ordinary capacities of judgment; and in the present case the persons affected were of more than ordinary capacity.

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[1] A curious glimpse of what seemed like real light came in the statement of a relation, that Harris was a member of the American Legation at Japan in 1861, and that he then for the first time made his views known to his future disciple. There certainly was a Harris at Japan at this time, but I can find no proof that he was the man.

From the very beginning this mystery is apparent. The first mention of Mr Harris occurs in a letter from Italy in the year 1860, and it is of the vaguest character. "I hope you will go and see Miss Fawcett," Laurence writes to his mother. "She may tell you some interesting things about Harris. I was sure you could not see him now, but I am glad you have got a promise for the future." Thus not only the convictions but the issues of practical life were held in the balance for these three at least; for the lady referred to, afterwards Mrs Cuthbert, became one of the closest companions of the Oliphants in their religious life, and the sharer of their experiences for good or evil.

This intimation shows that the American evangelist, if I may so describe him—apostle, prophet of strange things, as he appeared to them—was already chary of personal encounter, unwilling to vulgarise his doctrine by communication with chance inquirers, and assuming a much higher position than is usual to wandering preachers. He was, so far as I can make out, known only as a minister of the sect of Swedenborgians—the "New Jerusalem," as they called themselves—upon his first appearance. The only definite ground upon which the historian can go in respect to Mr Harris is contained in the shabby little volumes of sermons and addresses delivered by him in various localities—chapels in provincial towns, Marylebone Literary and Scientific Institutions, and suchlike—which attracted sufficient interest to be taken down by a shorthand writer and published obscurely for the benefit of that portion of the community which, in all the quarters of the country, gets note, by some mesmeric token or intuition, of anything that is new in the shape of religious doctrines—but never came to the knowledge of the general world.

And yet there was little that was new in the doctrine. With nothing but prejudice in my mind concerning this mysterious guide and teacher, I am bound to admit that these addresses are of a very remarkable character. A little florid in phraseology, as was perhaps necessary for the class to which they were addressed, they seem full of lofty enthusiasm and the warmest Christian feeling. Very little, if anything, is said that is inconsistent with the most orthodox Christianity, slightly tempered by the Swedenborgian theory, which replaces the Trinity by a Father and Mother God—a twofold instead of a threefold Unity—though even that is so little dwelt upon that it might easily be overlooked, even by a critical hearer; but not even the most careless could, I think, be unimpressed by the fervent and living nobility of faith, the high spiritual indignation against wrong-doing and against all that detracts from the divine essence and spirit of Christianity, with which the dingy pages, badly printed upon bad paper and in the meanest form, still burn and glow. The effect, no doubt, must have been greatly heightened when they were spoken by a man possessing so much sympathetic power as Mr Harris evidently had, to an audience already prepared, as the hearers in whom we are most interested certainly were, for the communication of this sacred fire. The very points that had most occupied the mind of Laurence Oliphant, as the reader has already seen—the hollowness and unreality of what was called religion, the difference between the divine creed and precepts, and the everyday existence of those who were their exponents and professed believers—were the object of Harris's crusade. He taught no novelty, but only—the greatest novelty of all—that men should put what they believed into practice, not playing with the possibilities of a divided allegiance between God and mammon, but giving an absolute—nay, remorseless—obedience, at the cost of any or every sacrifice, to the principles of a perfect life. I presume confidently that, so far as the disciples could be aware, the prophet himself at this period was without blame, and maintained his own high standard. Perhaps, it may be suggested by profane criticism, the mystery in which he wrapped himself would be beneficial to the maintenance of this impression upon their minds. The great novelty in him was that he required no adhesion to any doctrine, and did not demand of his converts that they should agree with him upon anything but the necessity of living a Christ-like life.

This was precisely what had been the dream and desire of Laurence since ever he had begun to think for himself: not a creed—he had been saturated with creeds. From his earliest childhood, when he had been made (as so many children in those days were made—perhaps even some still) to collect texts out of the Bible in proof of this and that doctrine—till now that he had begun to sharpen his shaft against the worldly holy, and to feel his heart sicken in the untruthfulness of fashionable life, it had been his longing and devout prayer to get hold of something that was absolutely genuine and true—something that promised not wrath and condemnation, but judgment and mercy; and here at last he had found it. The very hardness of the terms which the new prophet required, the severity of the obedience which was demanded of his disciples, heightened the effect of the revelation. Bidden to be natural, to think the best of others, to do the best he could for himself so as not to interfere with his advancement, to be content with a modified standard, and to allow that in so imperfect a world only a very imperfect goodness was possible—

were the soothing counsels that had been given to him, when in the intervals of amusement and occupation the pendulum swung back, and his thoughts returned to rend him. It was not in his nature steadfastly to make this compromise with the possible, as most of us do; but he was able, as he has himself so often said, to push the great question aside altogether, to occupy himself with his work, his pleasures, the excitement of novel encounters and experiences, so that there should be no room left, or as little as possible, in which to ponder upon the problem of humanity. The exhortation to come out of the world and be separate, which had rung in his ears from so many pulpits, was a farce to him, knowing so well as he did what it meant; that it meant Lady Broadhem's conversazione instead of Lady Veriphast's ball, and the craft of that worthy Bishop who was the last to leave the billiard-room on most nights, but would not even have it lighted up when the missionaries were there. But when the unknown apostle appeared out of the Unseen, and, holding out an austere hand, said, " Come! give up everything: live the life—not with judicious restraints, so as to keep your place in society and do the best for yourself; but absolutely, putting that life before everything:" then for the first time Laurence heard the voice which for all his previous life he had been longing to hear.

But I am unable to dive so far into the secrets of this period of his history as to tell how it worked, or whether it required many struggles to convince him that this was of far greater importance than the fabric of life which he had spent so many years and so much labour in building up, which he had brought now to a kind of climax, if not exactly as he hoped, yet such as few men of his age had attained, and to which almost any advancement he desired might be possible. A man whose opinions and information were so notable that he was sent for to Windsor to explain to the Sovereign an important complication in foreign affairs, was, of all men in the world, the one, we would think, to be least easily tempted to retire from a sphere in which such consultations are possible. But we have no longer the assistance of those confidences which were poured into his mother's bosom at other periods of his career; for she was now with him, fully sharing in all his thoughts, perhaps trembling for the result, even while she rejoiced over her son's capability for such a sacrifice. I am not, for my own part, disposed to believe that it was in any sense a life-and-death struggle with Laurence to make up his mind to the tremendous disruption before him. He would not hesitate, as most of us would do, to enter upon a course which might entail such supreme self-denial. To step back in sight of whither that tide was leading him, would not occur to a mind which had been in search at all times of the absolute. Perhaps prudence moved him so far as to suggest waiting until the result probable to follow upon his parliamentary life was clear. But even this supposition fails us in the after-light thrown by himself on that parliamentary career, when he confides to his future wife that his mouth was shut, in its beginning, by command of the prophet, so that he who had hoped all his life to make a name in the House of Commons became "a parliamentary failure." This of itself proves how long his intercourse with Mr Harris had lasted before the final resolution was taken.

The reader will remember in 'Piccadilly' the sudden appearance of the stranger whose arm is linked in that of the hero as he walks along his favourite pavement expounding the secrets of the better life to an astonished companion, and who finally accompanies him to America, making all doctors or other attendance unnecessary, when he is left half dead with excitement and the strain of feeling at the end of the book. "Ah Piccadilly! hallowed recollections may attach to those stones worn by the feet of the busy idiots in this vast asylum, for one sane man has trodden them, and I listened to the words of wisdom as they dropped from the lips of one so obscure that his name is still unknown in the land, but I doubted not who at that moment was the greatest man in Piccadilly." This is the disciple's estimate of his new master. In another portion of that work he quotes a passage from "the greatest poet of the age, as yet, alas! unknown to fame," being an extract from 'The Great Republic: a Poem of the Sun,' by Thomas Lake Harris. It was in 1865 that 'Piccadilly' was published (in 'Blackwood'), and it was not till 1867 that Laurence took the decisive step; so that it is clear it was no hasty step, but one fully considered and turned over during a couple, at least, of momentous years. "I daresay you will be surprised," he writes to Mr Blackwood, "at the half-serious, half-mysterious tone of the last parts; but after having attacked the religious world so sharply, it is necessary to show that one does not despise religion of a right kind."

It was in the early part of 1867, and in the House of Commons itself, that my own recollections become of any use to me in this record. I had previously made his acquaintance, but only in an accidental way, and it was for the first time on this occasion that we really became known to each other. It was in one of the galleries of the House, then, and probably still, appropriated to ladies, called at the time Lord Charles Russell's gallery, and placed at the other end of the House from the dark oriental birdcage of the Ladies' Gallery, from which women are permitted to peep at the legislators of the country. I remember very vividly the perspective of the House, brightly lighted, with something of the aspect of a vacant theatre during some dull prefatory piece: its benches empty save for an obscure figure, watchful of an opportunity, here and there; an unimportant voice asking a question; the patient officials in their places about the most patient Speaker, waiting, business-like and uninterested, going through their evening's work. Ladies, who are only on sufferance in that place, come early to secure their places, and all the routine of the question-hour had to be gone through before the debate began. The occasion was an important one. It was the evening on which Mr Disraeli was to bring forward in the form of resolutions the same Reform Bill on which he had just succeeded in driving Mr Gladstone out of office; while the latter statesman, suddenly turned into Opposition in respect to his own measure, had to do his best by all practicable parliamentary wiles to destroy its chances of success in other hands—one of the most curious manifestations of government by party which has perhaps ever been seen in England.

The conversation in the gallery, at that moment so much more interesting than anything going on below, began by some questions on my part as to the spiritualism so-called in which I was aware Laurence had many experiences. These questions were lightly put, but they were answered with a gravity for which I was quite unprepared. It was not that his new enlightenment had taken from him his former faith in the reality of those communications with the unseen. The result was quite contrary to this; and I listened with the surprise of a sceptic accustomed to think somewhat contemptuously of the freaks of table turning and rapping, while he warmly condemned these manifestations as not only vulgarities and impertinences, so to speak, but attempts to debase and lessen a new revelation of life and truth—and dangerous in every way to those who thus opened communications between their own spirits and the most debased inhabitants of the unseen world. The gasp of disconcerted astonishment with which one listened to this new view, in which the vulgar revelations of the mediums were recognised as real but denounced as pernicious, in utter contradiction not only of the trivial explanation with which the great Faraday had attempted to put these phenomena down—to the very partial satisfaction of the world, but also of one's own private conviction of their folly and unimportance—remains in my recollection as vividly as when, abashed and silenced, I listened, drawing back into myself. It was, he said, no place to enter into the deeper question; but he promised on some other occasion to make me acquainted with a better way.

It was perhaps in some haste to escape from an unlucky opening, as well as from the confusion of mind consequent upon having visibly approached with levity a matter of the deepest importance to my companion, that I put some question about parliamentary life which drew from him an equally unexpected reply. Notwithstanding the revelations of 'Piccadilly,' which had excited and startled the reader, while leaving him still doubtful whether there was more than an unconscious self-identification of the author with his strange hero, it was very difficult to realise how a man so apparently successful in everything he touched should be possessed with so strong a sense of dissatisfaction, so much impatience and indignation, with his present mode of life. He declared it was a life unendurable, which he at least could support no longer; that truth of purpose or earnestness was not in it; that no one, except a few powerless individuals, cared for the country or the real benefit of the people, but each party for the triumph it could win over the other—the opportunity of securing an advantage, the hope of placing itself first, and pulling down its opponents. This sudden burst of indignant disgust with the realities of life, so fiery and lofty in tone, so unexpected from those easy yet eloquent lips, to which banter and jest seemed more familiar than denunciation, in face of that slumbrous scene, so tedious yet so full of expectation, ready in a moment to wake into brilliant conflict, was very remarkable. A natural reluctance to believe in such a verdict, or accept a general and sweeping censure of the sort, mingled in the mind of the hearer with regret and sympathy for the higher aims and disappointed ideal of the speaker. It was no doubt the very curious transaction then going on, and which soon filled the empty House with eager listeners, and silenced every whisper to hear Mr Disraeli's statement, which had brought to a climax Oliphant's doubts and difficulties.

I add the following report of his own account of this matter, which had a great influence on his mind, from the recollection of another friend. He had come into Parliament as a Liberal and follower of Mr Gladstone, then pledged to introduce a new and widely reaching Reform Bill. Upon this, Mr Gladstone was, as the reader will recollect, and as has been already mentioned, defeated by Mr Disraeli. The new Government had barely begun its functions when Mr Disraeli took up the bill upon which he had defeated his adversaries, and brought it in again, a little changed in form but identical in principle, thus turning the tables completely, and placing the politicians who had formed the project in party opposition to it.

"After Mr Disraeli had intimated his intention of reviving Mr Gladstone's Reform Bill, a great Liberal meeting was held at the Reform Club to consider the state of affairs, when Mr Gladstone made a speech, in which he said that the principle of the bill was good, as it was one for which he was personally responsible, and that of course they must support it; but that its details must be greatly amended. A hole was to be picked here, and another there; such a clause must be cut out, and such another put in—till Oliphant clearly saw that the real intention was to wreck the bill, if possible, rather than let it count to the opposite party. This utterly silenced him, and convinced him, as he said, 'that there was no honesty on either side,' in a party sense, at least. With the help of a few genuine Liberals who refused to join in the party tactics, he formed a cave, called the Tea-Room Cave or Clique, as it was their habit to meet in the tea-room. The object of this party was to pass the Reform Bill at all hazards. It must be remembered that, while he considered Mr Gladstone's conduct as the most inexcusable, he always thought it dishonourable of Mr Disraeli to take up his adversary's measure. Only, Laurence could not see that this was a reason for opposing a bill that was good in itself. He was quite ready to serve God, though the devil bade him; only it gave him a lower opinion of the devil."

After the conversation above recorded, I waited for some time for the fulfilment of his promise to let me know more fully the terms of his new belief, and eventually wrote to him to remind him of it. His reply I have unfortunately mislaid; but it was to the effect that he had not forgotten, but that he was under great restrictions as to where and when he was permitted to speak, and to whom. He had not, it appeared, received any indication that I was one of those who had the ear to hear. He sent me by the same post one of the volumes of Mr Harris's sermons, to which I have referred. I presume that I must have replied to this, expressing my admiration for the singular fervency and earnestness of the addresses contained in this little book, which indeed struck me as very remarkable. The mystical part of it, in which the writer claimed to have seen and received actual communications by word of mouth, so to speak, from our Lord Himself, was very small — a few sentences here and there — while the appeal made to all to "live the life," and carry the imitation of Christ into every detail of existence, was the chief motive of the whole, and put forth often with great eloquence and most unusual animation and fervour. But I found so little that was not already known, and which I had not understood all my life as the burden of all Gospel teaching (except those few mystical sentences), that I must have asked for further information as to the revelations which were unexplained. I received the following letter in reply :—

"I still prefer, in answer to your note, to speak to you through the words of Mr Harris rather than from myself, and I therefore send you another of his books. I think you will see from it that the important factor in his teaching is not so much that a spirit-sight exists by which, as you say, 'we may penetrate the mists of this world and see into the sacred mystery beyond'—though that is most undoubtedly the case—as that organic changes are taking place whereby men are being brought into closer relations with the unseen world, and are becoming more open to the influences which directly proceed from it; and that thus we are enabled to bring ourselves into closer *rapport* with Him who was once a man, and established a human relationship with us for this express purpose—or with those evil ones who now, as of old, can take possession of, and destroy physically and morally, those who do not resist them. This change of organic conditions is evidenced by manifestations of a character novel to our present experiences, but which existed in past ages of the world. While, on the one hand, the powers of darkness made known their presence by various forms of possession, and the physical phenomena resulting from these multiplying, the breath of Christ, descending directly into the organisms of men to meet the invading force from below, makes known its presence also by physical sensations of a blessed and life-giving character, conveying with irresistible force the consciousness that Christ is actually descending with power and great glory a second time to dwell with us, and so to quicken their faculties and inspire their lives, that those who give themselves up to Him wholly and without reservation of any kind, and are ready, by a process of absolute self-extinction and self-sacrifice, to die as to their old nature, even while on this earth receive a divine influx, which will result in their own active regeneration, and enable them to act with great power on others. The world professes to believe in Christ, and in living Christ's life; but the popular belief in Christ is either a mean concession of opinion or an empty superstition: and the embodiment of His life in ours practically, and I may almost say dynamically, so that we can be conscious of His living in us and living out through us, and by physical sensations (consisting chiefly in changes in the natural respiration) that we should feel His bodily life in ours, would be considered an absurdity, though it is promised from one end of revelation to the other. It is this physical union with Christ which is the deeply solemn subject upon which I felt myself unable to converse with you, from a deficiency of this divine life in me, which would make my utterances still feeble and uncertain, and which has rendered it a matter of considerable doubt and difficulty even to write this much; for every effort to impart this truth is resisted so strongly from below. But it so happens that Mr Harris has recently returned from America to this country. He is not living in London; but if, after you have read these sermons, you would wish to hear more, I will let him know, though the life of suffering which he is called upon to lead, and the almost entire isolation which the great work in which he is engaged imposes upon him, renders it impossible for me to promise whether he can see you. But whether this be so or not, none who are really seeking fail to find, and those who are yearning for the Father's embrace will be led into it by the way specially appointed for them."

The reader may perhaps think that there was a want of courage in not following up this opening, though but a partial one, and endeavouring to see the man whose personal influence was so great and his views so interesting; but I have never pretended to be a conscious student of human nature, and the pretence is one highly objectionable to me,—while at the same time I have so rooted a faith in human sincerity and so little in imposture, that though never very likely at any time to fall under the spell, I was still more incapable of seeing through it. Besides, this strange and mysterious kind of transubstantiation, by which a man could be made not only spiritually but physically one with Christ, affected me with a sort of moral vertigo, which I fear has been the chief effect since of other and fuller expositions of that and further doctrines. It will be perceived that Harris still continued to envelop himself in a remoteness and inaccessibility which made it impossible for his fervid disciple to promise that he would see a new inquirer.

The next communication I had from Laurence was dated from Liverpool. He was just about to sail for America, having given up everything that had previously tempted him—his position, his prospects, politics, literature, society, every personal possession and hope. A universal cry of consternation followed this disappearance, expressed half in regrets for the deluded one (who was so little like an ordinary victim of delusion), and half in scorn of his prophet, the wretched fanatic, the vulgar mystic, who had got hold of him by what wonderful wiles or for what evil purposes who could say? A man who thus abandons the world for religious motives is almost sure, amid the wide censure that is inevitable, to encounter also a great deal of contempt: yet had he become a monk, either Roman or Anglican, a faint conception of his desire to save his soul might have penetrated the universal mind; but he did not do anything so comprehensible. He went into no convent, no place of holy traditions, but far away into the wilds, to "live the life," as he himself said, to work with his hands for his daily bread, giving up everything he possessed; in no tragic mood, from no shock of failure or disappointment, but with the cheerfulness and light-heartedness that were characteristic of him, and that sense of the humorous which in living or dying never forsook him. He knew what everybody would say,—the jibes, the witty remarks, the keen shafts of censure, the mocking with which his exit from the world would be received by those whom he left behind. He saw indeed, so to speak, the fun of it in other eyes, even when he felt in his own soul the extreme seriousness of the step he was taking. He disappeared, as if he had gone down for ever in the great sea which he had traversed to reach his new home and new life. The billows closed over him to all appearance as completely; and for three years he was as if he had never been.

I am enabled, by the kindness of a friend, Mrs Hankin, to add here several particulars, drawn from his own lips, of the experiences of the extraordinary new life into which he thus plunged. It was given many years after, when everything was changed; but his account of the manner in which he was led to throw in his fortunes with those of Mr Harris's community, contains no reflections upon the methods used to draw him there. He was indeed, according to this narrative, rather held at arm's-length than cajoled into the tremendous step which severed him from all his past life. Perhaps the apparent reluctance was but a more able way of drawing him on. The fact that he was forbidden to attempt to seek the parliamentary success on which his heart had been set, proves at once that there were no false ideas conveyed to him of the character of the yoke he was about to take upon his shoulders. This went so far that he was discouraged from making the final sacrifice as one above his strength, and even on landing in America was met by a messenger from Mr Harris to warn him that he should reflect again before coming to Brocton. "At the same time, however, there was forwarded to him such an exact moral diagnosis of his then condition, as to determine him more than ever to join this extraordinary leader." Thus he was held back and attracted irresistibly, at one and the same time.

On his arrival at Brocton, or, as it is formally called, Salem-on-Erie, the home of the community, he was plunged into the severest and rudest elements of life. Coming straight from Mayfair, "he was sent to sleep in a large loft containing only empty orange-boxes and one mattress, and he remembered arranging these articles so as to form some semblance of a room. His earliest work was clearing out a large cattle-shed or stable. He often, he said, recalled in a sort of nightmare the gloomy silent labour for days and days, wheeling barrows of dirt and rubbish in perfect loneliness, for he was not allowed to speak to any one; and even his food was conveyed to him by a silent messenger, to whom he might speak no word. Often, after this rough work was ended, and he came home dead-beat at nine o'clock, he was sent out again to draw water for household purposes till eleven o'clock, till his fingers were almost frost-bitten."

Even this picture, however, is scarcely so gloomy as that which depicts one feature of the spiritual life of this extraordinary place. Many mediums and possessed persons were brought to Harris, that he might cast out the devils by which they were afflicted. "Sometimes 'the infernals,' as they were called, were very active, and in that case the whole community had to watch to save those who were 'infested,' because it was believed that the infernals were more active in sleep. For this reason, in many instances persons were kept almost without sleep for months. One woman, in particular, for weeks was allowed only to sleep from nine o'clock till twelve, all the rest of the twenty-four hours being spent in the hardest work. In casting out or 'holding' against the devils, it was the custom to concentrate the mind firmly on the principle of evil, till it seemed almost to form itself into a definite form, and then to pray with frantic fervour, 'Bind him, Lord!' When the crisis was past, and the man or woman became open to spiritual influence, as betokened by deep sustained breathing, members used to sit up all night to 'bind' the infernals: it being understood that those who were most open to spiritual influence of the highest kind were also most subject to the other."

The wonderful understanding which, by general consent, the extraordinary man who was at the head of this strange community possessed of the characters, moods, and conditions of the minds subject to him, was endued with special powers of spiritual torture by the system which follows.

"He arranged them in groups of three or four persons to assimilate; but if the magnetism of one was found to be injurious to another, Harris was aware of it at once, and instantly separated them. Any strong, merely natural affection was injurious." In such cases, all ties of relationship were broken ruthlessly, and separations made between parents and children, husbands and wives, until "the affection was no longer selfish, but changed into a great spiritual love for the race; so that, instead of acting and reacting on one another, it could be poured out on all the world, or at least on those who were in a condition to receive this pure spiritual love," to the perfection of which the most perfect harmony was necessary, any bickering or jealousy immediately dispelling the influx and "breaking the sphere."

And not only did the head of the community keep incessant watch over all these occult manifestations, but he was at once the director of the domestic life within, where the members of the community worked together at agriculture—and also the head of every operation without, many of his disciples being sent out into business affairs, to conduct commercial operations or other kinds of profitable work, in order that they might bring in money for the community. "All the schemes connected with it, mercantile or agricultural, were in his hands; and he would constantly change the heads of departments if he thought their minds were becoming too much engrossed in business, recall and replace them with others who often knew nothing of their management, and had to learn through mistakes." The life at times was of the most primitive description, deprived of every pretence at physical comfort,—although, until the end of his existence, Laurence never departed from the belief that it was a life calculated to produce the highest development of the spiritual nature.

"The whole system was based on the belief that we are all batteries of some sort of unseen force, which we call influence, which is always uncertain in action, and often injurious. Under conditions of entire self-devotion, of absolute purity of life, and of earnest obedience to the voice of God, it has been found that the nature of man contains another quality of spiritual life, which connects him with a higher order of being, and completes his human nature with a divine complement, which has in it a power to attract and draw others to a higher spiritual plane, and by degrees to bring all who feel it into a divine bond of perfect union, which will at the last bring about a kingdom of God on earth."

It was in 1867 that Laurence disappeared from England. In 1870, as suddenly, he came back. The usual tales had been current, that he had awakened out of his delusion and unveiled his prophet, and returned to his senses, as people said—stories which I for one hoped were not true, feeling what such a disenchantment, after such a sacrifice, must have been for such a man; but nothing of this kind was the case. He came back more assured in his faith than ever—as serious, as humorous, as entertaining, as delightful a companion, and as much disposed to social enjoyment as when he had been one of the most popular men in London. And as he was one of those whom Society, always eager to be entertained and amused, does not forget, he stepped back out of the wilds into his place again, and became the courted of many circles, as if he had never missed a day. In the course of the summer he came one day to see me, and I need not say with what strong curiosity and interest I followed all that he told me about his new life. He explained, in the first place, many of the facts that seemed most hard to understand, describing how Mr Harris exacted a two-years' probation from his disciples as a test of their sincerity, that he might have no fanciful followers coming and going as feeling or caprice moved, but a band whose truth and endurance had been fully tested, and who knew their own mind, and the ground of their allegiance. The test in Laurence Oliphant's case had been the severe and extraordinary one of giving up all congenial work, all adventure, novelty, society, everything he had hitherto lived for, and making experience, as above related, of the hard existence of the labouring man. He had worked upon the farm, which was the headquarters of the community in America, a teamster, as he told me with a laugh, and a very bad one, oversetting his cart in the mud, and committing all manner of awkwardnesses. It seemed to my mind to put a certain reason, satisfactory in its way, into this ordeal, that it was not a mere fantastic preference of the ruder life of the fields, but had a real meaning as a proof of absolute sincerity and truth. While the probation lasted, the neophyte had stuck at nothing. He had "cadged strawberries" along the railway line, not as a penitential self-humiliation, but because it was a thing that had to be done by somebody, and conveyed to his mind no humiliation at all. He did not enter into any such details as those I have quoted, but talked much and freely of the general aim and purpose of the community, and of individuals who had been drawn into it from the very mouth of hell, so to speak, with no bond of doctrine or demanded belief, but only with the charge to "live the life." For his own part, having fulfilled his probation, his prophet and director, in whom his faith was unbounded, had bidden him return to his own sphere of work, and take up again his accustomed tools. All this seemed perfectly natural and reasonable when once the wisdom and greatness of Mr Harris was taken for granted; and on that point he had no doubt. Laurence had made over all he had to the community—I do not know how much it was—and the community made him an allowance when he returned home, to provide for his necessities until he got remunerative work. With this little provision, and with all his former prospects thrown aside, he came back in the full force of his matured powers—as ready, as witty, as cheerful, as potent a personality as ever—to do whatever Providence might find for him to do.

Lady Oliphant had followed her son to Brocton in 1868, the year following his own arrival there, and had entered upon her own very bitter probation before he had accomplished his. It has been often told that she, a woman always delicate and much regarded and studied by her husband and her son, was made to lay her ladyhood aside and all the habits of her life, and to engage in manual or menial labour, the work of the large household, taking her share of the washing, cooking, and cleaning of the house. I have no doubt that this was the case, any more than I have the least doubt that it was the smallest of matters to her fervent mind and strong faith, probably attended with much less hardship than appears on the surface—even perhaps with a little real good, in the way of strengthened health and a mind freed from many other preoccupations, by the healthy influence of personal exertion. But Mr Harris would have been a less man than he evidently was, had he accepted this as a sufficient ordeal; and accordingly the mother, whose son had been, as the reader knows, all in all to her—her companion, her correspondent, giving up his diplomatic life to calm her fears, opening to her the very depths of his thoughts—was ordained to give up her Lowry, so far as any special possession of him went. They lived, indeed, in the same community, and saw each other as any two members of the community did; but all the close and confidential intercourse of their life was made to end, and when the time came for his return to England, it was without a word of special leave-taking,—she who had broken her heart over every parting; and—she who had lived upon his letters and desired to share every serious thought—without a line of communication during his absence, to let her know anything about him, where he was or how he was. It was bitter, the highest refinement of cruelty; yet, if any man had the right to exact such a thing, the most severe proof of sincerity. Laurence went away without even a look of farewell; and he came back—and they had not a word together: not a moment of communion,—nothing to tell her where he had been, what he had been doing, the old friends he had seen, the new objects to which his life was to be devoted. He told me of this with the troubled laugh of emotion, and of how it had been almost too much for her, and had threatened to bring about an absolute break-down of heart and strength. She fell ill, and her son had to be sent for lest she should die. But in the end her faith, her obedience, what she thought her religious duty, conquered, and she stood out the trial. I have been told that she was also commanded to go to a lady whose influence upon and relations with Laurence in a former part of his life had given her the deepest pain, to offer her the new light, and to invite her to become a member of the community and abandon all evil ways. This, if true, must have been before she left England; but even such a terrible commission would have been little beside the tremendous renunciation required of her — which she made. Thus the prophet put his hand upon the very sources of life, and controlled them. He must at least have been a man of extraordinary skill and insight, as well as of remorseless purpose and determination.

No sound, so far as I am aware, came out of the unknown during these years. I can find no letters of the period, unless it be one, which I may give here as an exposition, so far as was ever given, of the principles and practice of the community. It was in answer to an anxious letter from a very old and dear friend, Mr Louis Liesching, of the Ceylon Civil Service, who had been a favourite in the Oliphants' household during their tranquil colonial life, when Laurence was a boy and the young friend not much more. The love which both mother and son bore him had justified this affectionate and sorrowing inquirer in his anxious claim to know the reason of their withdrawal from the world, and in what Lady Oliphant calls his "agonised appeal" to them to reconsider their decision. Mr Liesching's letter was addressed to her; but it was Laurence, excusing her by the explanation that she was by no means so good a correspondent as in former days, who answered the letter, giving his friend an account of their motives and practices:—

"When I sat down to write I thought it would be possible for me to give you some account which would satisfy you: the subject is so sacred, so vast, and so mysterious, that I am unable to enter upon it within the limits of a letter; but this you must believe, that I have submitted neither my reason nor my will to any man,—that nothing but a guidance as directly from God as that which Saul obeyed when he left his old life for a new one, could have induced me to abandon a career which, humanly speaking, was full of the brightest promise, and throw up a social position which it had cost me a lifetime to establish. That God, after having spoken to the world for thousands of years directly through the lips of man and through no other channel, should now, at the moment of its greatest extremity, utterly abandon it, is not a reasonable supposition. In taking the Bible as your only guide, as I do, you take what came only through man, and what was decided by other men, no better judges than you and I, to be inspired. If you ask what our tenets are, they simply condense and crystallise into the uses of our daily life the teachings of Christ, under direct divine guidance, and we enjoy evidences both of an external and internal character which the world would call supernatural, encouraging us when we are obeying His will, checking us when we are going astray, and uniting us daily more nearly to Him and to each other. Thus we believe that Christ is again appearing in this world, making Himself felt in the very organisms of those who open themselves directly to His influence, and endowing them with wisdom and with power which will enable them to cope successfully with all those social, political, and ecclesiastical inversions which constitute antichrist.

"Before, however, we are in a condition to begin the work of reform without, we have to establish it within, — before we are soldiers fit to enter the lists against the forces of Pandemonium, embodied and intrenched in the institutions of mankind, we have to wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual powers which assail us from within,—and we have to undergo a most severe and scorching discipline to prepare us for the struggle upon which we shall enter when we are summoned from our retirement, and called upon to live out literally in the world the life which Christ inculcated. It will be far easier to do this among the heathen than among the Levites and Pharisees, hypocrites, of Christendom. For the devil's stronghold, as you seem to have found out, is now, as it was when Christ came, not among the publicans and harlots, but among the sects.

"We have no dogmas: our fundamental principle is absolute and entire self-sacrifice; our motive is not the salvation of our souls, but the regeneration of humanity; our absorbing study is the practical embodiment of that new commandment which those who heard it only partially understood, "that ye love one another," but which is as new, in the sense of never having been up to this time either comprehended or practised, as it was then. The hatreds and shams of Christendom drove me into, and kept me for years in, open infidelity and most reckless dissipation. When I was your son's age, like him I desired to love God and live for divine ends: for God mercifully implants in the hearts of most children the germs of pure and lofty aspiration; but constituted as the world is, where are they to find development? Let him join any so-called Christian denomination, and he finds the preachers of religion envious, bigoted, and the best of them unable, if they wished, to live a Christ life. If he goes into the world, he finds the infernal principle of competition, which strikes at the root of all unselfish love, entirely paramount: he can only succeed by taking better care of number one than his neighbours. The most sacred tie of life, marriage, is a lottery; for he has no means of knowing certainly who is the one for whom God destines him, or where to find her. He instinctively yearns for solidarity, which is harmony, and he finds competition, which is natural hatred. It is terrible what a condition society is fallen into, and how sad must be the fate of those growing up with generous divinely sent ambitions, destined to be crushed almost before they have had time to make their presence felt.

"Dear Louis, knowing what I have gone through and where I am, the thought of your son's fate seems to press itself upon me with an irresistible force. I would save him while there is yet time, and bring him under the influence of that calm and peaceful sphere where the presence of Christ broods like a dove over the efforts of those few devoted souls who are striving at all hazards and at all costs to fit themselves to be His absolute and exclusive servants, literally loving neither father nor mother, nor wife nor children, nor brother nor sister, nor even their own lives, as they love their divine Master. You need not fear erroneous or unorthodox teaching in doctrinals: all we claim is a direct consciousness of divine guidance, without the comfort and consolation of which, mercifully vouchsafed to us, it would be impossible to support the trials and spiritual sufferings we are called upon to bear for His sake. Still, I would rather you would read and judge for yourself, if you feel so disposed: at the same time, do not think that I am pressing this, or manifesting any desire to persuade, however difficult it may be for me to resist doing so. It is not we but the Lord who calls, and therefore act only in obedience to your highest impressions, after looking earnestly to Him for help and guidance in the matter. I shall say no more, fearing that I may, unconsciously to myself, allow some wish of my own to creep in. Of this thing I am assured, that however much we may differ here,—however widely sundered by sentiment, by distance,—if we are all three determined to love and serve Christ, to the exclusion of every other object, we shall all three be hereafter indissolubly united in His divine harmony by the object of our worship, Himself."

Lady Oliphant added to this letter a little note of tender kindness, repeating the assurance that her affection was unbroken either by the great distance, the change of her ways of thinking, or the silence which had fallen between herself and her friends. "One thought," she says, "is constantly with me, and that is, how heartily our beloved Sir Anthony would have embraced this life, how he would have found so many of the perplexities which troubled him solved. I am reminded of him daily, and I am sure we are both doing just as should have made him happy by remaining here. My head," adds this dear lady, "is my weak point, and I am thankful that I am able to be useful in other ways." The reader will feel the pathos of these simple words, remembering in what occupations a delicate woman, whose antecedents had been of so different a kind, was now making herself useful.

Enclosed with this letter was a copy of one addressed by another member of the community to a brother, as little enlightened on the subject and as anxious as Mr Liesching, which Laurence thought, with the unconscious humility of a man absorbed in a great subject, to be a better exposition than his own. He adds that this is written by a Quaker, a man known and reputed for his Christian life—"not come out of the slough, as I am." It may be added that in his account of himself, as given up to reckless dissipation, there is evidently much of that exaggerated penitence which all sudden converts are so apt to fall into. Society abounds with slander, and he was not likely to escape from its too-usual darts; but that he was ever a vicious man I do not for a moment believe. The vortex of London society in the season, although a giddy whirl, and requiring a strong brain (or none at all) to maintain a proper equilibrium, would scarcely represent "reckless dissipation" in the ordinary sense of the word, or in the phraseology of a man of the world. The Quaker gentleman's letter is as follows:—

"You ask after our daily life here, how we spend our time. There is a short sentence of G. Fox which will not inaptly express what we do and propose to do. The words are, 'All things useful in creation.' That one word 'useful' has a particular charm for the people here. They are of an intensely practical genius. With us everything must have a *use* and every one his work. We have none set apart for the ministry, and we have no salaries to spare for any clergyman, minus a cure, who chanced to come our way. Our maxim is, that the more spiritual we become, the more practical we must become also. We must meet the world in its own way and on its own terms, and conquer all uses, arts, sciences, industries for the City of our God, until the time comes of which it is written 'that the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into her.' Our community here we often call '*the Use*.' Every one here must have his or her 'use' or 'uses,' according to his or her special genius. I said in my former letter that the New Church renewed the body and mind as well as the soul. Now, the influx of the Spirit, or internal breathing of which we are sensationally and organically conscious, natural respiration undergoing a new change, begets a new ardour, a divine activity for all work; and whether we are planting potatoes, cooking a joint, singing a hymn, or having a picnic in the woods, it is our ambition (if I may use the word) to do it the *very best*, as God would do and does His own work. Our pleasures are joy-births from God; our labour is worship, and our meals more than Passovers. We have no place here for those who want to meditate, unless the meditation ultimates in useful work. There is no Simon Stylites here —not even a Madame Guyon need come, unless she would work. Our maxims are the reverse of those of the world. A Christian manufacturer in Lancashire or New England employs any men who can work for him, without reference to the regenerate life: our maxim is, that regeneration makes a man a better worker. The world says, Every man for himself. I am writing to one who labours for the good of the poor to the best of his ability. Do all your labours touch more than the edge of the festering sore that affects and wastes poor perishing humanity? If all the poor of Leeds were clothed and fed to-morrow, and work found for them, would not the moral malaria that fastens on modern society produce another dreary crop? How is it that, as wealth increases in London, the poor grow poorer and the criminal classes more fiend-like? Political economists wonder how it is.

> 'Reformers fail because they change the letter
> And not the spirit of the world's design;
> Tyrant and slave create the scourge and fetter;
> As is the worshipper will be the shrine.
> The ideal fails, though perfect were the plan,—
> World-harmony springs through the perfect man.'

Men laugh at Ruskin, but Ruskin is more than half right. The Church of Christ so-called comes, stiff with age, and lame with creed, and pampered with endowment, but it cannot touch the heart of the evil. Christ comes and weeps, and says, 'These are my sheep for whom I died.' If He appeared again as a man among Christians, and attempted to live out His own teaching, they would put Him in a lunatic asylum. There is only one thing can save the world, and that is 'solidarity with holiness'—a oneness of regenerate man. I have in days gone by followed the chimera of universal suffrage; yet a universal suffrage of unregenerate men cannot materially alter things for the better, if indeed at all. If democracy is the cure for the evils of our time, how is it that the House of Representatives here is more corrupt than the British House of Commons? and this with the many material advantages which America has over England.

"The ancient landmarks are fading, the faith of many grows cold, sects are dividing and redividing. An intense selfishness throughout society is the root of the evils of our times: men of genius point out the failings of their fellows, but they in turn fail to point out the true remedy. Carlyle, Ruskin, Emerson, Tennyson, they can portray all 'the ills that flesh is heir to'; but when we examine their remedies, it is like viewing the remains of some broken glass windows,—very beautiful, but not a perfect picture can be found in all. We point to Christ, His words, His life. 'Ecce Homo,' not the 'Ecce Homo' of Professor Seeley with all his eloquence, but, as Horace Bushnell says, 'Life in Christ, and Christ in Life.'

"You ask how many of us are here. There are between thirty and forty of us. Few, you may think, for such a work—few, indeed, if the work was ours; but we are nothing. Christ is all. We could have many adherents if we relaxed, but we may not unauthorised relax one iota of our faith or life. Those who come here must have no country, no relations or friends, no pursuits but such as are given them of God.

They must literally 'forsake all and take up the cross.' Any one coming here must be willing to be anything or nothing,—to be a drudge if the Lord's will can be best served in that way: he must account a martyr death as a very small sacrifice, and a *martyr life* as the great and glorious thing to strive for. The world has come to this, that nothing but a race of heroes can redeem it. Christ was the great Hero-Martyr, and the servant is not above his Lord.

"Death and Hell fight, and will fight, against this Church, as they have fought against every other. It was not a vain boast when Satan said to Christ, 'All the kingdoms of the world will I give Thee, and the glory of them, if Thou wilt worship me.' It was the assertion of a fact, and Satan still possesses the kingdoms of this world and their glory. And he will not give up his hold without a titanic struggle. When this Church rises in the power of its Lord to cope mightily with the evils of the world, it will meet Satan and his myrmidons at every step, as it does already, and a last and direful persecution will be raised against it; and then also it will be known that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall afterwards be revealed. But we cannot unauthorised go to preach in the world. Our business at present is to embody heavenly ideas in practical things, to redeem the soil from evil, to consolidate and take deep root. Glimmerings of these truths have found their way into many sects. The Shakers, for instance, have solidarity, but have abolished marriage, which is a divine ordinance; but they are a very pure good people. The Perfectionists have also the co-operative principle; but they have admitted the vile principle of free-love, which is an abomination in the sight of God. The Moravians saw the truth in part, but it could not be carried out until the time appointed of God. We have simply been invited of the Lord, and have come, 'and the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and whosoever will, let him come.' The world has still to be won, and Christ still says, 'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.' The soldiers in the Lamb's army will have to bear the cross and wear the thorny crown; but these do not conceal the Tree of Life and the crown of glory which fadeth not away."

These sentiments are echoed by Lady Oliphant in another letter to Mr Liesching, who had not been satisfied with the first, but evidently continued his inquiries, with too warm an affection for his friends to be easily contented with their voluntary banishment and exile. She has been warning him not to put any faith in the reports in the American papers, which had already begun the odious system of interviewing :—

"There is no secret, and there is nothing to tell that the world would understand, and the deeper things are too sacred for newspaper columns. That Breath, which is described in the little book entitled 'The Breath of God with Man,'[1] is a physical fact of which all here are conscious, and with many it is sometimes audible. This admits of no doubting nor argument—it is simply a truth: and so of other interior matters which are convincing and satisfactory to us, but which can scarcely be received by those who are satisfied with the religion they already possess. We were not. I beg you not to trouble yourself with fears for us, nor for our community being broken up through some dreadful sin; and certainly it will not be from the cause you dread, 'forbidding to marry.' It just proves to me the hopelessness of attempting to explain these things when the mind is not prepared to receive them. The foundation of the life here is 'Orderly Marriage,' and the difficulty of bringing Christians to a spiritual perception of this divine relation is the one hindrance even here to the growth of the Lord's life among us. There are daily applications from all parts for admission to our body; but only three have been added to our number during the last year. There have been some who came in a spirit of self-confidence, who were obliged to leave from utter failure to understand the process, and submit to it, of rooting out and crushing out the self-hood. It is a fiery ordeal; but each one who realises what this life is intended for, feels the need and blessing, being helped in their struggles to this end."

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[1] I have endeavoured in vain to procure this book—one of the publications, I believe, of Mr Harris.

I can give no details, save these, of the habits of the community in which Laurence and his mother thus found perfect peace and contentment. The few relics of it which strayed after him into Asia, if not into Europe, in after years, showed little that seemed to indicate an exaltation and superiority so undoubted. Plain and somewhat homely Americans, and more or less eccentric English—individuals whose absorption in questions of moral and spiritual interest, and indifference to many other matters usually held as important, gave them a certain separation without any marked elevation, either in life or manners—were all that the ordinary spectator saw. At a later period the life was certainly without any formal religious observances,—no church-going, no set periods or modes of devotion. The men in their field-work, the women in their household labours, considered themselves as serving God more truly than by mere acts of worship, and the inner life was that which was considered worthy of incessant cultivation and progress. I have never been able in the smallest degree to fathom what was meant by the spiritual respiration by which they believed even their bodily conditions to be changed: nor is it easy to enter into the new law of marriage, which was already the most distinctive feature of their economy. That the relation ought to be strictly Platonic, to use a comprehensible phrase—a union as of brother and sister, though distinguished by an absolute oneness of spirit, peculiar to the "sacred tie," "the most sacred of ordinances," in which, as they believed, the being of the dual Godhead was displayed and imitated—was, I believe, their strange creed. That it was not always consistently carried out was of course inevitable. What is much more wonderful is that it *was* sometimes carried out with unflinching resolution, neither the most tender affection nor the usual circumstances of confidential intimacy between married persons affecting the self-imposed rule. It is not a question which can be entered into further; but it may to some readers afford a clue to the somewhat incomprehensible influence exercised upon certain minds by the mystic teachings of Laurence Oliphant's later works,—works which are as chaos to the majority of readers, but to some direct revelations from heaven.

I may here quote one amusing episode, to break the blank of this mysterious retirement, which was told me by Mrs Rosamond Oliphant (I use this form of nomenclature, though it is scarcely English, by way of distinguishing the lady, his second wife, who was the faithful nurse and attendant of his closing life) as having been told to her by her husband,—an amusing outbreak of the almost boyish love of fun and hankering after adventure which never deserted him. One cannot but feel the blank of tedium and monotony which wrapped that once brilliant life, when a man so fond of excitement and variety, at once a sportsman and a politician, the friend of insurgents and filibusters, who had scoured every disaffected country in Christendom, and lightly carried his life in his hands through many a dangerous crisis, could thus risk it, in pure exuberance of spirits and protest against the commonplace, in such an escapade. The story begins with a brief sketch of the same details of his life at Brocton, which have been already quoted.

"He slept in a straw bed over a stable, where he also ate his solitary meals on a deal box, no other piece of furniture being in the room. He rose every morning at four—in the winter it was bitterly cold—cleaned and fed the horses, and worked at farm-work till eight o'clock at night. He was quite unaccustomed to manual work, and it wearied him, body and soul. But it was thus only, as he felt, 'that the devil could be thrashed out of him.'

"One bitter winter's night, he was driving back to the stable after his long day's work with a sleigh and a pair of vigorous horses. He had been leading a life of the most tiresome description for many months, and the tedious routine had become almost unbearable to him. Suddenly his horses got frightened at something in the way, and with a quick impulse Laurence threw away the reins, and throwing himself into the bottom of the sleigh, yelled so vociferously as to arouse the villagers, who ran into the street. The horses, mad with fright, and urged on by Laurence kicking and shouting in the bottom of the sleigh, soon left the village far behind, and the sleigh spun over the frozen snow. The barn where they were kept was some distance from the village; and to his surprise, when the horses reached it, they swept through the gate without upsetting the sleigh, and drew up before the barn-door trembling in every limb. Laurence coolly climbed out and led them into the stable. The excited villagers rushed far along the road in search of him, expecting to find him in the bottom of a ditch, crushed by the heavy sleigh. After a vain search, they returned to the barn for a consultation, and found Laurence quietly feeding his horses, very much refreshed by a taste of that excitement which he had so loved in earlier life."

Thus the martyr who had given up everything seized a moment of boyish hilarity, and enjoyed the mystification of the villagers, as if he had never known anything more exciting. The wild momentary dash of the frightened horses, the muddy farm-labourer kicking and bellowing, regardless of life and dignity and gravity, in consideration of the moment of wild fun which made the blood again course through his veins as of old, make a most characteristic picture.

In all that is said, however, on this subject, and all that we can penetrate of the utter prose and dulness of the existence of the community to which Laurence had joined himself, it must be remembered that we are calculating without the potent individuality then and for so long after the head of it, and which was really the connecting link between the rough American farmer and the accomplished Englishman. All my attempts to find materials by which the character and personal power of Mr Harris at this period could be explained have been ineffectual. He is described, both by those who find in him an incarnation of the devil, and those to whom he is nothing less than angelic—an almost wiser and more imperious Gabriel—in the same abstract terms, there being neither on one side nor the other any one capable, it would appear, of making him visible as a man. From the remarkable picture made by Laurence Oliphant in 'Masollam,' and which is supposed to be a study more or less from the life, I may quote the following description of the personal characteristics and commanding influence of the prophet—adding, however, the explanation that it may not be an impartial one, having been written after the disenchantment which brought that personage down from the highest heights of moral supremacy to the position of a mercenary schemer and false prophet, a diabolical agency for evil, instead of almost the first and best of created beings:—

"There was a remarkable alternation of vivacity and deliberation about the movements of Mr Masollam. His voice seemed pitched in two different keys, the effect of which was, when he changed them, to make one seem a distant echo of the other—a species of ventriloquistic phenomenon which was calculated to impart a sudden and not altogether pleasant shock to the nerves of the listeners. When he talked with what I may term his 'near' voice, he was generally rapid and vivacious; when he exchanged it for his 'far-off' one, he was solemn and impressive. His hair, which had once been raven black, was now streaked with grey, but it was still thick, and fell in a massive wave over his ears, and nearly to his shoulders, giving him something of a leonine aspect. His brow was overhanging and bushy, and his eyes were like revolving lights in two dark caverns, so fitfully did they seem to emit flashes, and then lose all expression. Like his voice, they too had a near and a far-off expression, which could be adjusted to the required focus like a telescope, growing smaller and smaller as though in an effort to project the sight beyond the limits of natural vision. At such times they would be so entirely devoid of all appreciation of outward objects, as to produce almost the impression of blindness, when suddenly the focus would change, the pupil expand, and rays flash from them like lightning from a thunder-cloud, giving an unexpected and extraordinary brilliancy to a face which seemed promptly to respond to the summons. The general cast of countenance, the upper part of which, were it not for the depth of the eye-sockets, would have been strikingly handsome, was decidedly Semitic; and in repose the general effect was almost statuesque in its calm fixedness. The mouth was partially concealed by a heavy moustache and long iron-grey beard; but the transition from repose to animation revealed an extraordinary flexibility in those muscles which had a moment before appeared so rigid, and the whole character of the countenance was altered as suddenly as the expression of the eye. It would perhaps be prying too much into the secrets of nature, or, at all events, into the secrets of Mr Masollam's nature, to inquire whether this lightening and darkening of the countenance was voluntary or not. In a lesser degree, it is a common phenomenon with us all: the effect of one class of emotions is, vulgarly speaking, to make a man look black, and of another to make him look bright. The peculiarity of Mr Masollam was, that he could look so much blacker and brighter than most people, and make the change of expression with such extraordinary rapidity and intensity, that it seemed a sort of facial legerdemain, and suggested the suspicion that it might be an acquired faculty. There was, moreover, another change which he apparently had the power of working on his countenance, which affects other people involuntarily, and which generally, especially in the case of the fair sex, does so very much against their will. . . . Mr Masollam had the faculty of looking very much older one hour than he did the next. There were moments when a careful study of his wrinkles and of his dull faded-looking eyes would lead you to put him down at eighty if he was a day; and there were others when his flashing glance, expanding nostril, broad smooth brow, and mobile mouth, would make a rejuvenating combination, that would for a moment convince you that you had been at least five-and-twenty years out in your first estimate. . . . These rapid contrasts were calculated to arrest the attention of the most casual observer, and to produce a sensation which was not altogether pleasant when first one made his acquaintance. It was not exactly mistrust,—for both manners were perfectly frank and natural,—so much as perplexity. He seemed to be two opposite characters rolled into one, and to be presenting undesigningly a curious moral and physiological problem for solution which had a disagreeable sort of attractiveness about it, for you almost immediately felt it to be insoluble, and yet it would not let you rest. He might be the best or the worst of men."

This curious picture, in which the enlightenment of repulsion and indignation had taken the place of the entire faith and submission of earlier days, does yet portray a man of singular interest, and very unlike the common herd anywhere. During the three years of absolute obedience at Brocton which I have tried to describe, he was the chief and most prominent figure, giving importance and harmony to all the rest; for to Laurence he was at that time the one inspired among men, the chief of human masters, in intimate alliance with all the powers of heaven. When he declared, as on a previous page, that "I have submitted neither my reason nor my will to any man," and that it was nothing less than "a guidance from God, as direct as that which Saul obeyed"—his meaning was not that he himself had received any miraculous communication, but that this which was conveyed to him through his leader was the direct inspiration of God. Christ had come a second time: this great event had actually occurred, and Harris had seen and spoken with and received the direct instructions of the Lord. This was the theory which held the Brocton community together. "Come see a man who has told me all that ever I did," were almost the words in which this man was described. "He knew my people at home better than I did, though he had never seen them," was the testimony borne afterwards by another believer.

There were, indeed, always differences of language in the way in which he was spoken of within themselves and to the world. Outside inquirers received the somewhat equivocal answer that will and reason were submitted to no man, with the reservation that it was not Harris's will that was followed, but that of God expressed through him. But within the sacred enclosure there was no such pretence, and the reader will see hereafter that nothing less than absolute obedience was exacted. But he was there, among them, their absolute ruler, a divinely inspired man, full of the extraordinary dramatic attractiveness of a constantly changing aspect, which, even when seen from the darker side, is full of interest of the most exciting kind. And no doubt he was a companion full of interest, if sometimes too overwhelming for human nature's daily food, with his wonderful calm assumption of intercourse with the unseen, with his gifts of natural eloquence, and with the insight of a man evidently born to rule and sway other men. These intuitions of his must have been half miraculous in their way, as such a combination of sympathy, keen perception, and unscrupulous power might be expected to be. It is possible to understand how sometimes, when the other member of the little farming community, who knew life in different aspects from those it bore at Brocton, was assailed by sudden heartrending home-sickness—doubts perhaps as to whether he had sold his birthright for the merest pottage—there would come to him a sudden message, betraying absolute penetration of his thoughts, as clear as if they had been read by light from heaven. Laurence has told me that this had occurred again and again in his experience, giving him unlooked-for help when he needed it most. Who can tell how it came about? Perhaps a glance—as the leader, compelled to have his wits always about him, and who could only preserve his sway by perpetual watchfulness, passed the disciple, bent under his inappropriate load—betrayed a wavering, a sickening of heart, a dangerous recollection of other things, on the part of that disciple, to which the imagination and skill of the guide responded in instantaneous enlightenment. At all events, the presence of that evidently extraordinary intelligence, that keen and constant observation, that strong imperious will and purpose, goes far to explain how Brocton was made possible to Laurence. I do not feel it necessary to believe that Harris was a man of evil purpose or bad motives. Laurence, even in the sharp revulsion of his after-enlightenment, never believed that this was the case in these earlier years. At all events, at the beginning the companionship of this man was not vulgar magic, but full of human charm and attractiveness, as well as of assumed authority and guidance from heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW ERA: ALICE.

It was in the year 1870, as has been said, that Laurence Oliphant returned home after his disappearance from the world. Very few letters had come from him during the first period of his seclusion. His mother was no longer at home to be the confidant of all his adventures, and for two years at least the oracle was altogether silent. In 1869 I find one or two letters to his publisher, Mr Blackwood, chiefly about the republication of 'Piccadilly,' which had been postponed from time to time, on account among other things of the delays of Mr Richard Doyle, who had consented to illustrate the book. But it can scarcely be supposed that a man labouring on his farm, in the manner described in the preceding chapter, could have much time to enter into a literary venture; though nothing can be more odd and eccentric than the thought that the most brilliant of contemporary satires, a fiery arrow discharged into the very heart of the most highly organised and conventional society, should have come from the hard hand of a farm-labourer at "Brocton, Chataugua County," living the most elementary and primitive life, not much advanced above the level of the horses of his team.

It is not less curious, however, that this religious recluse and martyr, who had given up all the promises of worldly reputation and pleasantness for the sake of what he considered the cause of God and the truth, should, as soon as he had leisure to cast his eyes around him, and perceive the novel circumstances of his new location, have burst into the still more startling satire and pungent criticism of the strange story called "Dollie and the Two Smiths," which was published in 'Blackwood's Magazine' in the early part of the year 1870, just before his return to England. How he, who was himself living under the rigour of spiritual indications, in obedience to suggestions from the unseen, could treat Mrs Dollie's amazing changes of sentiment with such daring laughter, is inconceivable to the looker-on. Fun had never been so wild in him, nor satire more bold, nor could anything be supposed more completely unlike the conventional idea of a man who had given up everything for the sake of religion, than the laughable yet subtle sketch of an inconceivable condition of affairs, too ludicrous to be immoral, which he launched at his new neighbours with the same laugh which had bewildered the old. "Dollie and the two Smiths" is however still more trenchant than 'Piccadilly,' especially as it is pure narrative, and without the faintest intimation from beginning to end that the narrator found anything in it to disapprove.

About the time that this wonderful sketch was being made, he recommenced the more familiar record of life and thought to his friend Mr Blackwood in Edinburgh:—

"My mother has become wedded to this country, and has no thought at present of leaving it. There is much to write about here; but it is scarcely possible for me to write it, and quite impossible for you to print what I should probably write. The country is undergoing a complete change; but the ultimate effect of the forces at work cannot be judged of by the appearances on the political horizon. The black cloud may in reality be concealing a very bright sunrise, and the political features from which you especially, and I in a less degree, turn with disgust, may be necessary to the growth of something which will not turn out such an abortion as it looks now. That this unseemly infant has only just got through its teething, and has got measles, whooping-cough, and a host of other troubles in the shape of civil wars to come through, I have no doubt; but I believe the highest hopes of humanity are bound up with its future—and with that of Japan, widely dissimilar though they be. . . . The revolution here is not political but moral. That is what I should have liked to write about, if I dared; but I can only write now what I feel and know to be true, and that is so dreadfully different from what the world believes."

The inclination thus stated to discuss the new *régime* in America, with its many strange developments, sounds very serious in the letter, and seems to imply the most grave discussion of existing evils and hopes. It is whimsical in the extreme to find that what it ends in is the wild fun and satire of the story of Dollie. The hand that laid down 'Piccadilly' before the revolution in his own individual life, picked up the same keen weapon as soon as he was released, with no diminution of its keen force and daring trenchant stroke, though indeed the moral purpose is less visible, and the glittering edge is tempered by no intent of healing. Thus it is clear that, whatever the first chapter of the life at Brocton had done for Laurence, by all its toils and humiliations, it had at least left intact the gleam of fun and humorous perception that was in his unregenerate eyes.

His first appearance in the home of all his training and associations, after such a break in his life, was naturally more trying and notable than any after revisitation. When I saw him in Windsor during the summer, as has been related, there was in him a sort of restlessness, as of elation and pleasurable excitement, which was very striking. It had been said by many that he was coming home disenchanted, disappointed, returning in the blight of hope and feeling, which is the natural fate of the enthusiast who has sold his birthright for something even less than the mess of pottage; but no one who encountered him was long left under this delusion. He was in high spirits, unfeignedly glad to be released from his drudgery and to return to his native air of intellectual novelty and variety, after long fasting from all that was exciting or agreeable. But this natural sentiment did not in the least degree interfere with his faith, which was as profound and unshaken as ever. The little community, with all its straitness, was still to him the ideal of society; its undistinguished members his chosen brethren. No one of them, so far as I am aware, except Mr Harris, has ever been heard of beyond their own natural and limited circle. Their interests were few, their occupations of the most engrossing and humble description; but no doubt had entered the mind of Laurence as to their being the enlightened of the earth. The convert came back with his head high, and his eyes full of keen wit and spirit as of old. He told the tale of his own incompetence as a farm-labourer with the most genial amusement, and made no secret of his satisfaction in being permitted once more to work with the tools he had been familiar with all his life, his probation having been fully accomplished in the community, and his earnestness and fidelity having stood all tests; but his heart was with his brethren still.

He gave me, I remember, details of the manner in which he was still occupied for the service of the community in his spare hours, which were so extraordinary in their humility and devotion, that I fear to add an element almost of ridicule to the story by describing them. But notwithstanding the tremendous gap between the past and the present, his own position was virtually unchanged by his absence. It happened to him, as it happens to few men self-exiled from the busy world, to take up his friendships where he had left them, and to find everybody as glad to see him as ever. Nobody had forgotten him. He was too piquant in his personality, and amused society too much, to fall aside out of its favour. Everywhere he was received with open arms. To be sure, the old paths of advancement were closed, and to a man who might be summoned to America at any time at a moment's notice, diplomatic service or the House of Commons would have been impossible, even could he have returned to them; but in every other way he was received and fêted as of yore. Indeed, if anything, the curiosity about him, his strange disappearance, and the hundred rumours that were afloat on the subject, increased the delight in his company which every intelligent person who came in his way could not help feeling. Everything that was wonderful was said about his sect, and the inquiries made of him were sometimes of the most ludicrous character. To these he knew very well how to respond with a laugh or jest or winged word, which went through the foolish questioner like an arrow. To myself he appeared to have a sort of holiday happiness about him, a delight in talking over the trials and difficulties he had passed through, such as a man has who has come triumphantly through a long voyage. "Yes," he said, "I cadged the strawberries along the line, it is quite true: partly because there was nobody else to do it, and we wanted to sell them; and partly because I would not have it said that there was anything I objected to do." These arguments were unanswerable in their good sense, and made the reasonable hearer feel how foolish were any objections to such a simple duty.

On more recondite matters he was quite ready to talk also—but here with much less understanding on my part; nor did he insist on anything except his old formula of 'Piccadilly,' "Live the life." He told me of some one, an English gentleman, much fallen and degraded, who had been picked up in the very worst state of wretchedness and despair, and redeemed by the charge given him of a sort of humble inn on the outskirts of Brocton estate, where there were rough and "rowdy" customers only, to be subdued and kept in order by some one acquainted with their ways, and whom the absence of all formulas, even of church-going, and the simple practical rule of life, had restored to virtue and honour. This was to show how wide were the principles of the community, and how simple its aim. As for the transcendental phenomenon of internal or spiritual respiration, which was at that time the only thing occult and hard to understand, except the boundless influence of Mr Harris, little was said. And I must add that Harris was constantly spoken of as influencing, not as commanding. What he suggested appeared, sometimes instantly, sometimes only after much resistance of mind, but always in the end convincingly, to be the absolute best that could be done, and was obeyed accordingly. Of course there was a certain sophistry in this, as in the corresponding statement that there was no giving up of individual property, but that each member of the community continued to hold his own, contrary to the popular opinion that things were in common among them. But the fact was not concealed that many of the members were poor, and had to be maintained at the general cost, though all gave their labour, as much as it was worth, to the common-weal; and Laurence informed me without any hesitation that he himself had a small, a very small, allowance from the community to pay his expenses in Europe until he should have got something to do, which was to be not only for his own advantage but theirs. The allowance was so small that he had to travel in third-class carriages, and content himself with the most modest and obscure lodging, all which privations were objects of amused satisfaction to him in the happy light-heartedness of his nature. A more cheerful image could not be than that which he presented at this moment, with something of a schoolboy's pleasure and delightful elation in the fulness of recovered life.

The only thing that troubled him was that the 'Times' and other influential papers did not review 'Piccadilly' as he thought they ought to have done; but nevertheless the book had a great success, and was read and commented upon everywhere. The world had been allowed time to forget the first impression made by its serial publication, and it came with a fresh shock of sensation upon those most qualified to understand its brilliant assault upon society. I do not think that the American sketch of Dollie was ever appreciated as it seems to me to deserve, probably because the society of rural America—at which the critic, disguised in the strange garments of a farm-labourer, looked out with humorous eyes from the Brocton settlement—was unknown to the English reader: or perhaps because the subject was too startling for the general. With the exception of this one extraordinary sketch, scarcely anything came from the pen which had been so busy during all the earlier portion of his life, and was again so industrious in its later part, for nearly ten years. For some portion of that time, however, he was acting as 'Times' correspondent, producing daily, and in large quantities, that kind of literature which is fortunately well recompensed at the moment, but loses all the advantages of a hereafter, and never ranks as literature at all.

This new beginning was made at the breaking out of the Franco-German war, in the latter half of the year 1870. Laurence had already written for the 'Times' on many occasions, but never before permanently and officially as one of its representatives. He had still hoped, it would appear, for some appointment under Government even at so late a date; but one way or another, was fully determined to have his part in the great tumult which was sweeping over the Continent. The following account of his start upon the dangerous and exciting mission confided to him is from a letter addressed to the Duchess of Somerset, at this period his frequent and most entertaining correspondent.

"TOURS, *Sept.* 25 [1870].

"I left London in such a hurry that I had not time to write you the line I intended, to tell you why I am here. I went down and stayed a few days with Lord Granville at Walmer, but nothing came of it beyond extreme civility and kindness, and vague promises that took no definite form; so when I met Delane the day after my return, and found he wanted a correspondent to go to Lyons to write letters for the 'Times,' and was prepared to be generous, I accepted his terms: and here I am on my way to the south of France generally, which would be very agreeable if there were not so much chance of being arrested as a spy. I have just seen Lord Lyons, who sees nothing left for France now but a siege of Paris and a fight to the bitter end, whatever that may be. I have just come off a thirty-six hours' journey along railways encumbered with wounded men, and soldiers hurrying to some army which does not yet exist. The whole country seems to be rising: nothing to be seen but soldiers."

His adventures during the actual campaign of 1870 and 1871 have been so admirably written by himself, that it would be useless to attempt any other description of them. The wanderings from field to field, sometimes in advance of the army, sometimes (but seldom) behind, the terrible scenes of which he was sometimes a witness, the wonderful little vignettes of private life in which he had often some merciful act to perform, always a kindly part to play, are all told with his usual vivid force and lightness of touch. His plan was to drive in the rough country carriage with which he had provided himself at his outset, as near to the point of attack as possible, and then getting out, either to skirmish about on his own account, not fighting, but inspecting everything that was going on, or if possible to reach some coign of vantage, such as the steeple of a village church, from which he could see everything. Sometimes he was carried along in the midst of a charge, sometimes he arrived before the troops, to find himself sole master of an evacuated town or deserted village, set on fire, not by enemies, but by its flying inhabitants. On one such occasion he had stepped forward to receive with a somewhat rash jest the commandant of the regiment which had arrived just too late, and was offered quarters with the staff; "but," he adds, "I had my letter to write and post [he had been on foot all day, and had twice barely escaped with his life in the many chances of active warfare], and this involved a five-mile drive by moonlight to the rear across the most ghastly field which can well be imagined."

"I had some trouble in finding my carriage. I had left it at a well-defined position on the battlefield of the day before; but to reach it, I had to walk for more than a mile over a plain where the carcases of men and horses were not merely thickly strewn, but frozen into all sorts of fantastic attitudes. The thermometer had been 16° below the freezing-point the previous night, and men only slightly wounded, who had not been able to crawl to their comrades, had been frozen to death. One man was stiff in a sitting position, with both his arms lifted straight above his head, as though his last moments had been spent in an invocation, and it gave one a shudder in the clear moonlight to approach him. Others were cramped up in a death-agony, and so frozen. In places many together, French and German, were mingled—not because they had been at close quarters, but because the same ground had first been occupied by one and then by the other, perhaps at an interval of half a day. I think I was more comfortable with bullets ringing in my ears than walking amid the distorted shadows of these dead and stiffened men; and it was quite a relief to see a haystack on fire and a regiment warming themselves at it, and my prudent coachman within comfortable distance of the ruddy blaze. Then comes the hard part of the correspondent's life—I had still to dine. I had lived since the morning's coffee on a loaf of bread, which I had been picking at all day. Then to write my letter—a good two hours' task; then to see that it was safely posted either that night or the next morning early, so as to give me time to get to the field for the third day's battle. And all this after having been on a strain of exertion and excitement since daylight; and then the gentleman at ease in London reads it all in his arm-chair after breakfast for a penny, or at most twopence-halfpenny."

The next night after these adventures he found himself in a village in which every possible lodging seemed to be taken up, and wandered about in the dark through the heavily falling snow, in bitter cold, hunger, and desolation, when he found a hovel in a lane, upon the door of which no name was chalked, and which had therefore apparently escaped appropriation. After much knocking, he was at last faintly answered from within by a woman's voice timidly inquiring what he wanted. "I said I would explain as soon as I was let in, and pushing the door open, I found myself in a room lighted only by the dying embers of a fire. Striking a lucifer match, I became aware of the presence of two young women, aged eighteen or twenty, shivering with terror, one of them weeping bitterly. These I attempted to reassure by the most dulcet tones and pacific questions. I explained my forlorn condition, expressed my willingness to sleep under a hedge rather than cause them one moment's uneasiness, painted in strong language the dangers which surrounded them in the absence of any protector, declared my willingness—nay, my anxiety—to constitute myself their protector, expatiated on my harmless and generally innocent disposition where the fair sex were concerned, and the length to which my chivalry was capable of carrying me where they were in peril; and finally succeeded in extorting an invitation to become their guest. I declined to force myself upon them, and would only stay if asked. They said they had no male protector. One of them was married, but her husband had left on the approach of the Germans, and the other was her sister; and they threw themselves upon my mercy. I asked them if they had any provisions in the house; but the supply was so small that, after chalking my designation on the door to prevent the room being occupied in my absence, I started off to bring my traps from the carriage and any provender I could lay hands upon. I came in for a slice of beef while the distribution was being made to the soldiers, and was soon established by the side of a roaring fire broiling a steak, and most eagerly waited upon by my two charming hostesses. I soon after won their complete confidence by turning off a rather noisy band of soldiers who came looking for quarters, and listened sympathetically to the long tale of sorrows which they poured into my ear. They were very poor, and there was literally but one room in the house. This contained two beds, one of which was usually occupied by the young married couple, while her sister slept in the other. They were hung with heavy blue curtains, which entirely enveloped them. The sheets were coarse but clean, and I had a good supply of my own rugs. When the cravings of my appetite had been appeased, I suggested in the most delicate manner that I should go to bed first, pull the curtains together, and put my head under the bedclothes, while they went to rest in the other bed. This arrangement suited them perfectly; and I shortly after received a fresh mark of their confidence by hearing one of them snore. The weather was so boisterous on the following day that it was impossible to continue the march: so I brought enough provisions to the hut for all three, and paid for my accommodation so liberally when I left the day after—as I felt it would be an act of charity which would be highly applauded by the proprietors of the journal I served, and out of whose pockets it came—that I have every reason to hope that the two poor girls look back to the days when their village was occupied by the Germans as among the pleasantest and most profitable of their lives."

Such were the daily vicissitudes of his life throughout the campaign, and it would be hard to find more interesting reading than in the pages which record the 'Adventures of a War Correspondent.'

The following letter to the Duchess of Somerset is concerned with the state of mind and temper in the two armies rather than with personal adventure, and is deeply interesting as the opinion of a candid observer of both parties. In some of his prognostications Laurence was wrong; but that is a very usual occurrence when the keenest student of human nature ventures upon prophecy.

"Alençon, 18*th January* [1871].

"I have often been meaning to write to you, but when I have finished my letter to the 'Times,' and the business correspondence which I cannot avoid, my head generally gives me notice that I have used it enough. Since leaving Lyons I have been writing from the German armies, and ever since the Grand-Duke of Mecklenburg has had a separate command, my letters have been dated from his headquarters. I have thus had an opportunity of seeing twelve general or partial engagements, and of forming some idea of the prospects of the two armies. From the beginning the French never seemed to have a chance, and the conviction is at last forcing itself upon the sensible part of the nation that they have no alternative but to make peace. The extreme democratic party and the south of France, which has not suffered, are the exceptions; and when Paris falls, the question of peace or war will divide the country and sow the seeds of discussion, which will, I think, produce a civil war, and may perhaps split the country geographically, the republican or war party being in the south, the monarchical or peace party in the north. Meantime, contact with the German armies has not the effect of enlisting one's sympathies in their favour. The official or Junker class detests England with a mortal hatred, because they instinctively feel that the institutions of England strike at the root of their various class prejudices and bureaucratic system. The Liberal party in Germany is only waiting for the war to be over to assert themselves, and I think a German revolution will follow very closely upon the heels of the French one, when class interests may produce combinations between the two countries in spite of their national antipathies. I have found it very difficult to get on with the Grand-Duke's staff: they are so supercilious and arrogant, and cannot understand how a newspaper correspondent can be a gentleman.

"The feeling against England among the Germans is increasing every day, and it is amusing to hear them discuss plans for the invasion of England. They have worked the whole thing out: Blumenthal told me he had considered it from every point of view, and regarded it as quite feasible. On the other hand, the French are a danger to no one any longer. They were a mere bubble at best; and it seems to me they will never again be powerful enough to cause alarm to any one. No one was a stronger Francomaniac than I was, or feared less the German powers than I did, at the beginning of this war; but I confess I have begun to change. I remember the Duke being of the same opinion, and there is no doubt that France with her large fleet has always been our natural enemy, nor had I any idea of the bitterness which existed against us in Germany. True, the natural enemy of Germany is Russia, and all sensible Germans look upon a war there as inevitable. This is the danger which Bismarck has foreseen, and devoted all his policy to avoid.

"We have had no difficulty in routing Chanzy's army again, as we did near Orleans. He is supposed to be concentrating near Laval, whither we shall probably follow him. Nothing can be more cowardly or miserable than the conduct of the French troops. The Germans pillage terribly; but I am obliged to keep silence on many points, or I should be sent away from the army. I have a great difficulty, as it is, to manage my correspondence so as to tell the truth without giving offence."

This special work was of course ended when the war came to a conclusion. There is a story which was widely circulated at the time, but for which I should not have been disposed to vouch, having merely heard it as everybody did, but for subsequent confirmation,—to the effect that Mr Harris, before permitting his disciple to undertake the work of war correspondent, gave him a sign which was to show him that his term of service was over, and to serve as a recall to America. The sign was to be the entrance of a bullet through the window of the room in which he was—rather an ineffectual token, one would think, to a man about whose head the bullets had been whistling night and day. The sign was accomplished, according to this legend, during the struggle of the Commune, when the prophesied bullet did actually come through a window at which he was eagerly watching the commotion in the street below,—a very likely incident. This story, which in itself sounds somewhat fabulous, has been confirmed by notes (already quoted) taken by a friend from Laurence's lips, at a much later period, where, among other interferences of Harris with his life and cherished wishes, he describes repeated recalls "in the midst of undertakings on which I was engaged for the community, just when I was getting things into working order. I was thus recalled from Paris at a moment's notice, when my departure was most inconvenient, and I was much tempted to disobey orders; but (it was at the time of the Commune) I had turned into a house to avoid a charge of soldiery, and a bullet grazed my hair. I took it for a sign that my protection was removed, and got away as soon as I could manage to do so."

This compulsory visit to America was so short that he was again in Paris, and had assumed the permanent post of 'Times' correspondent there, in the autumn or early winter of 1871. I think, but am not sure, that his mother had returned home about the time of this hasty visit, having gone through the terrible probation of separation from her beloved child with such fortitude as was possible, and being now judged capable of bearing the trial of being happy in his society as of old. At all events, whether she had returned before or came back with him, she was at least settled in Paris in December with her son, when I passed through on my way from the snows and pines of the High Burgundy, where I had been paying a visit. Paris was but a ghost of her bright and careless self in these days. The shining city, clean as a bride in her general aspect as one had always seen her, was almost impassable, like grimy London in a thaw, every corner heaped with slush and mud; and here and there, as the slow cab that conveyed the traveller from the distant Gare de Lyon to the Mirabeau Hotel crept along at a footpace, gaunt ruins rising into the wintry morning light, the Tuileries, the Hôtel de Ville, the Ministry of War, and many others, terrible tokens of what had been. Life and traffic had already begun to recover, since human nature, not only in Paris, loathes the monotony of mourning as much as any other incubus: but the sight of these roofless and windowless piles of building, lifting their charred walls in the very centre of the movement of the great city, was strangely overwhelming and impressive. Lady Oliphant and her son drove me about to see these ruins and the general aspect of the place; and great as was my interest in themselves, the subjects of the time, the apparent ruin of France, the chaos of government, the sense that no one knew what another day might bring forth, occupied our minds to the exclusion of all personal matters. Laurence, however, had changed in aspect from the time of his first reappearance in the world. He was sobered out of his first elation; and in the return to his natural habits of life, and recovery of a definite sphere of action—which, if it was not all that he might once have hoped, was yet worthy of himself and his training—had recovered his natural tone, that of a man essentially of Society, and of the *grand jour* and *plein air*, to use words in which the French have the advantage of us,—of a large and full existence. He was no longer displaced from all the common grooves of life, as when I had last seen him, but had found an outlet for the activities of his mind and being, and was strenuously and wholesomely occupied in a manner of work quite suitable to him. That he had again a home had no doubt also something to do with this increased composure and tranquillity, notwithstanding that, at the special moment at which I found them, Lady Oliphant had temporarily left him to perform the duties of a mother to a family of children, to whom she was in no way specially linked save by that bounden duty of "living the life," which made her hold herself at the service of all who needed help. I remember that the things which struck me most at this strange crisis of life, in the larger and lesser circle, were the forlorn squalor and dirt of that once carefully brushed and polished Paris in her humiliation—and the little motherless boy thrusting out his little boot to be buttoned to the white-haired lady, in whose instant readiness to respond to his call, though he was none of hers, the child had perfect trust.

The period of Laurence Oliphant's life spent in Paris not only led to his marriage, and was thus for ever memorable in his existence, but was, I think, in itself a cheerful episode, in which his circumstances and work were agreeable to him, and he had the comfort of feeling himself in a congenial sphere, more or less living among his own species, after many dangers and discomforts past. But it is indeed vain to speak of a man as living among his own species, however much this may externally have been the case, in face of the fact that in this very sphere, so strangely different from anything they could have known, he was living continually, not only under the influence, but at the command, of the homely and insignificant community at Brocton, and their extraordinary and mysterious head. Externally in most respects his position was a very desirable one. He was in the full tide of that lively intellectual life with which nothing long interferes in the French capital, and at the fountain-head of all that happened, seeing everything, to a certain extent influencing the course of affairs, deeply interested in the great problems that were beginning to work themselves out, and with a daily share in that very process, his good opinion courted on all sides—the very Head of the State, as will be afterwards seen, seeking his support, and opening his mind to so influential an agent as the correspondent of the 'Times'—who was not a mere 'Times' correspondent, but a man already universally known and distinguished in many ways. All these advantages were his, and his wit, his spirit, his prompt and ready judgment, were ready for them all. It was a position much more likely to favour the growth of a certain self-estimation and self-confidence than of humility and submission. It is almost inconceivable to turn from this picture to the image of the prophet, the obscure head of a little sect in America, a preacher and teacher little known, totally unacquainted with the life with which his disciple was surrounded, knowing nothing of its laws or its habits, ignorant of the merest elements of its economy, yet entirely dominating the existence and actions of that brilliant man of the world, and claiming, or at least exercising, absolute authority over him in all the complications of a career of which the despot had neither experience nor knowledge. Yet so it was; and in the next step in Laurence Oliphant's career, which opens up his most private life, and all his personal purposes and motives, we learn, almost with consternation, how unbroken was the bond which existed between him and not only the Master but the other minor authorities of the little commonwealth.

For it was in the end of this eventful year that he first met in Paris the beautiful and delightful companion of his future life. It is difficult to those who did not know her to convey an idea of what Alice le Strange was. "Not a woman at all, an angel!" cried an enthusiast who met her in a later portion of her life. It is perhaps more wise, however, to say with Robert Browning, that far more than any angelic similitude of which we know nothing, she was herself—one of the most perfect flowers of humankind, a young woman of an ancient and long-established race, with all the advantages of fine and careful training, and that knowledge from her cradle of good society, good manners, and notable persons, which is an advantage beyond all estimation to the mind qualified to profit by it. She was the daughter of Henry le Strange of Hunstanton, in Norfolk, who was not only the representative of a long line of country gentlemen, but a man of very high artistic tastes and knowledge, and who had a great deal to do with the revival of ecclesiastical art forty or fifty years ago: and of his wife, the daughter of John Stewart of Drumin, Banffshire, an accomplished woman, of great social distinction and popularity both in London and Paris. She had also the unusual felicity of what might be called almost a third parent in her stepfather, Mr Wynne Finch (Mr le Strange having died while his children were young), between whom and the child, so full of brilliant originality, there existed a wonderful bond of mutual sympathy and devotion; and to whose constant understanding and care she owed much of her development, as well as the happiness of a delightful home. Alice was the second daughter, and one of the most attractive and charming of God's creatures, with considerable beauty and much talent, full of brightness and originality, sympathetic, clear-headed, yet an enthusiast, and with that gift of beautiful diction and melodious speech which is one of the most perfect ever given to man. She was a fine musician as well as a brilliant conversationalist, and she had been accustomed all her life to the best of English, or indeed it may be said European, society, for Paris was as much her home as London. It very rarely happens that friends, acquaintances, and lookers-on are all of one opinion concerning any individual; but I have never heard of any diversity of view in respect to Alice le Strange. I have heard her spoken of in all kinds of quarters, and from the most fastidious critics in London down to the humble and homely German colonists in Haifa, there has never been but one voice. She was so full of "charm," that inexplicable fascination which is more than beauty, that it was possible her actual gifts might have been overlooked in the pleasure of encountering herself, the combination of them all; so that the beauty, the wit, the sweet vivacity, the pure and brilliant intelligence, became so many delightful discoveries after the first and greatest, of finding one's self face to face with a being so gracious and delightful.

It may be said of Miss le Strange, as of Laurence, that she had fully tasted all the applauses and sweetnesses of society. She was not a novice, overawed by curious and entrancing religious experiences on the very threshold of life, but had known what it was to be admired and worshipped, and learned at once how exciting and how unsatisfactory are the triumphs of society. When she encountered in Paris, in the most natural way, the correspondent of the 'Times,' so much talked of and so universally known, she had arrived at the critical moment which in many fine natures is decisive of all future fate. She was a little weary even of admiration, tired of unprofitable life, longing for something better and higher than she had as yet found. The benevolences of country life had not seemed enough for her, as they do to some women, whom they enable to hold the balance more or less even between the dissipations of society and the requirements of serious existence. She had not felt one side of her nature sufficiently indemnified for its temporary subjection to the other by any such gentle round of duties. Years before, her clear spirit had become involved in religious doubt, or rather in that more general dissatisfaction with all the remedies and panaceas proposed to her, in which many young souls make secret shipwreck. She wanted, like Edward Irving, something more magnanimous, something more exacting and authoritative, than the calm and indulgent Christianity which she generally met with. Her slight shoulders longed for a cross to be laid upon them, and her impatient heart for some great thing to suffer or to do.

The first approach to intimacy between the young creature so prepared and ready for the influence of their religious views, and the mother and son who were her neighbours, was brought about, I believe, by an invitation from Lady Oliphant to Miss le Strange to accompany her on the long drives which she was in the habit of taking daily; and Laurence soon had opportunities of meeting and knowing the beautiful stranger. It had, I gather from an intimation in a letter, been conceded by the supreme authorities in America some time before that an embargo as to marriage which had been laid upon him should be taken off—though whether he had been told of this before he saw Alice le Strange I am unable to tell. I am glad to say, however, that notwithstanding the intense preoccupation with the most serious questions, which is apparent in the letters from which I am about to quote, and the evident fact that she had been instantly initiated into the secrets of the new life, and had received with enthusiasm and faith the lessons of her two ardent instructors, yet there is every reason to believe that this pair, so completely suited to each other, so formed and adapted for union, fell honestly and spontaneously in love with each other, in the old natural way, without any *arrière pensée.* It was their belief (as they thought, quite novel and wonderful; but, in fact, the faith of all religious mystics, both Catholic and Puritan), that even in loving each other, the chief thing to be considered was the service each could do for God and for the benefit of the world, and not any selfish happiness of their own.

In the spring of 1872, having had no warning of the possibility of any such happy event, I received a letter, written with all the triumph and elation of a fortunate lover, announcing the engagement, and the happiness which he said he had never expected should fall to his lot, and enclosing a photograph of the bright and delightful girl who was to share his life. I have mislaid this letter; but I am permitted to quote another of a very similar character, addressed to a much more important correspondent.

"Paris, *March* 6, 1872.

"My happiness has come at last, one that I am sure you would approve, the sweetest and frankest nature that I ever met, in thorough sympathy with all my vagaries, which she utterly agrees with and understands—with the intellect of a man and the intuitions of a woman; in fact, the one person who, when I was not looking for her, was given to me, so that I could not mistake it. My mother felt from the first that she was the person. But I forget that you have been asking, Who? She is a daughter of the late Mr le Strange of Hunstanton, Norfolk, and a step-daughter of Wynne Finch's, who was in the House of Commons. She is twenty-six, and according to my taste very pretty; but that has nothing to do with it, only it fortunately happens so. I shall be so glad to present her to you some day; but I don't know when the marriage may take place: the same hand that arranged the first part will arrange the second."

He had excellent reason for the doubt which is visible in the last sentence of his letter; for no sooner had the intimation of the engagement been made, than the very depths were stirred against the betrothed pair. The opposition on the part of Miss le Strange's family and friends to her marriage with a man who was disinclined to make any settlements, and who even went so far as to object to her own fortune being settled upon herself, in order not to interfere with her freedom in using it as she pleased (it being no doubt understood that her motive was to dedicate it to the uses of the community at Brocton) was very natural—and their inability to understand his motives in thus risking her comfort in the eventualities of the future is comprehensible enough. But the difficulties put in the way of the lovers by the family were as nothing to the commotion stirred up in the distant community by the news. A fragment of a letter sent by a lady apparently high in the little commonwealth, and I believe addressed to Lady Oliphant, expresses in a way which would be almost ludicrous were it not so solemn, the consternation with which it was received. I may say that the members of Mr Harris's community had special names by which they were known within its bosom, and which I withhold; for it is difficult to restrain an uneasy inclination to smile at the fantastic and somewhat puerile conceit which renders a well-known and distinguished man like Laurence Oliphant unrecognisable amid the little world of nobodies, under a name which might have suited a sentimental schoolboy. It will be enough to use the initial W. in quoting from this letter. "Father," of course, is Mr Harris:—

"When Father left word that W. was no longer to hold himself from seeking a wife, we of course understood that he knew how terrible marriage was, and that unless through weakness or inability to stand alone, while passing through regenerative training, some had to marry, the rapid way to victory and use was through purification first and marriage afterwards, if God so ordered ; and he [Harris] never dreamed of his [Laurence's] loving any one till they had been thoroughly tested by the discipline of the life. I am sure he will see this when he is free enough. He has come so near the centre of the Use, that he must, if he holds ground and retains his place, share in its sharpest trials, in its deepest martyrdoms. . . . If this dear girl can give him up utterly to God, and enter upon whatever discipline is before her, to prepare herself for the place and use in God's new kingdom, He will bring them together when and as He will, if they are for each other."

The pair were thus plunged into uncertainties and doubts, which filled the period of their engagement with trouble. The letters from which I am allowed to quote, form perhaps the most extraordinary correspondence that ever passed between a pair of lovers. Unfortunately the replies have not been preserved ; but they are reflected more or less in the letters of Laurence, whose love and delight in his chosen bride are thus rudely brought to the question. It does not seem to have once entered into his mind to contest the judgment of the "Father." He implores his beloved to receive it with patience, to believe that it is the best, to trust in the perfect enlightenment of the leader, who cannot do wrong; he entreats her to write, making her own submission, and conciliating that potentate. When there comes an actual order to stop the marriage, he himself would seem to have had no idea of anything but complete obedience; and it is the most extraordinary spectacle to see the passionate lover pausing in all the enthusiasm of his hopes—which are not those of ordinary (or extraordinary) happiness with her, but of the immense advantage to the cause, of her work, and of the redoubled energy and force which her help will bring—to show himself and her what a still more excellent thing it will be to bear the reversal of all these hopes and make up their mind to separation, if their united submission and representations do not change the judgment of the autocrat and his counsellors. It is with this anxious desire that he begs of her to answer the letter above quoted, with a promise to obey its requirements. "Pour out your heart to her as if she were your mother," he says. "Tell her all without reserve. And if you feel you can, call her mother," he adds, wistfully. No more strange exhibition of the strength and weakness involved in such amazing relationships could be: for the faith is one which could move mountains, and the subjection almost too wonderful for words.

The correspondence throughout is, as has been said, a very extraordinary one. The constant struggle to regard their love as an abstract and spiritual passion, and subdue the warm human sentiment which is perpetually bursting forth; his happiness and pride in herself, and the sense that she is his, subdued into a boast of the efficiency of the service she is to be trained to render to the great cause; his eagerness that she should accept the yoke, which yet he has a thousand fears she will find heavy and painful; his anxious descriptions, excuses, deprecations of all criticism in respect to "the dear ones in America," and even the occasional sophistries he is betrayed into, in order that the reputation of these dear ones may be kept intact,—afford, as they reveal themselves, the most curious glimpse into the heart and deepest feelings of the man.

The dates, or rather no dates, are extremely confusing, and it is difficult to attempt any arrangement of the letters; but they were all written in the months of April and May 1872, when Miss le Strange was in London with her mother. The engagement had taken place in March,—too soon, he almost allows; but he had been unable to restrain the avowal of his feelings. Some time before this, however, it is apparent, the eager girl had been admitted into the sanctuary of his religious life, and had felt a new world of sacred joy and a new revelation of active service opened to her, which seems to have answered every longing of her nature, and filled her unsatisfied thoughts with light and love. He speaks to her fondly, as his little one, his nursling, his darling baby, won by him to another and better life, and his, not for time alone, but for eternity; but at the same time as a great instrument in God's hand, a leader of myriads yet to be. To reproduce all his fond instructions, directions, encouragements, and the checks which are if possible still more fond—adjurations to her to be a little dull if she can, to subdue her intellectual powers, and veil her natural brilliancy, and accept the conditions of the work before her—would be impossible; but I may quote a few paragraphs here and there. "What more intense happiness could the world give," he cries, in a sudden outburst of feeling, "than to see my darling overcoming all opposition, and, like some flaming angel, leading on the suffering womanhood of her world to new and unsuspected possibilities of victory?"

"Now that you are one of us, all your gifts belong to those with whom you are spiritually connected, far more than they do to you. In one sense you efface your own individuality, while in another the world will find you more of an individual than ever, and you yourself will be conscious of increased power and originality. In the degree in which you can regard your power of pleasing as belonging to all of us, and as not being in any sense your own, will it increase, and will the joy which it will bring you grow; for you will feel that every one who comes under the divine spell that you will thus be able to exercise, comes towards the light, not towards you as an individual. You will soon get to loathe and hate the idea that it could ever have mattered to you whether people liked you or not, considering the importance of what you want them to like. You will become a divine decoy, luring with angelic art those round whom the evil ones have woven their toils, out of them, and getting them upon strong safe ground. And the notion of taking any credit to yourself for thus using the talents given you for this express purpose, will become utterly repulsive to you, and so will be the idea that the talents themselves are any more yours than mine. You have thrown them into the common stock, darling, and they will soon get so mixed up with the other people's, that you won't know one from another. Besides, now that you are of us, you will often be conscious of being helped and upheld, and will therefore have nothing to be vain of. I have sometimes been conscious that the most successful things I have done have been owing to the strength I derived from an internal *rapport* with Mr Harris, who was fighting down influences opposing me at the time."

His anxiety to lead her to full comprehension of this bond and willingness to enter into it calls forth many persuasions and explanations, and anticipatory defences on behalf of the central figure in the little world into which Laurence had led his love. He bids her remember that all the new light which has come to her, and the new development of life which she has embraced so eagerly, is owing to one man:—

"It may be that the great life, and knowledge what the life is, which you are receiving, is to prepare you for the strain your faith may be put to when you see him, and have to accept him and the phenomena which surround him, and which are almost sure to produce upon you a painful effect. He himself may not be externally sympathetic, his way of communicating things may jar upon you, and many things may happen which may even appear faults or incredible. At those times, remember where you would have been now without him, and that whatever the mother or D. or I have received or have been able to tell you, we owe to him."

On another occasion he again takes up the defence of the prophet, who at this very moment was endeavouring to postpone or break off the union upon which his heart was so much set:—

"So far from his wishes being despotic, when we have got into right relations with him, it becomes our greatest pleasure and delight to take counsel with him, to draw from him words of wisdom which we may try to carry out; because, of course, the very nature of his life and habits unfit him for the rough contact of the world. He knows nothing whatever of society and its usages, and wants the legs and arms and brains accustomed to the workaday world to carry out and put into practice the glorious moral truths that he has been the instrument of imparting.

In America, where life is rough, and our little party are simple and remote from all worldly influences, he has come more out into the direction of the labours and industries of every day. But here I have always wondered how it was to be done, and now I am beginning to hope that it may be done through us, if we can hold ourselves humble and loving; for he 'senses' the least coldness towards himself, and it stops everything. We have each of us to feel more knit into his organism than into each other. His functions are pivotal, and we in a sense meet in him; for our breath is in some mysterious way enfolded in his. All he knows of you is through the conspiration of your united breaths. It differs from the afflatus, of which Miss —— speaks so lightly, in certain particulars, which he will explain to you some day. But we all owe under God what we have and feel as the breath to him: the particular quality of it which we enjoy came first to him, and owing to our *rapport* with him we get the same. Nor would it be possible for any one to be in our breath who was not first in closest *rapport* with him and then with each other. It is the sensational bond of our union; it binds us together mysteriously and internally, and with a force which makes us feel so absolutely one that we can oppose to the world, when the time comes, a power before which everything must give way."

The extracts which follow are of a more general character, and I think that some of his expressions, especially about prayer, are very fine, and will find an echo in many hearts. In one instance he has been confiding to her some severe spiritual struggles of his own :—

"Doubtless this is a weakness in my own will, and I ask, Why is not my will stronger? and so get into the interminable circle from which there is no escape except by the very illogical but efficacious means of prayer. And then I always find myself praying about you. It seems as if I was of 'no account,' as the Yankees say, in comparison. It does not occur to me that it would be asking much to give one's soul for those who are chosen by God for His work, much less one's body."

On another occasion, speaking of prayer, and especially of prayer for her, he describes himself as "uplifted with such full breath-pulsations, encouraging me and telling me what to ask for you. In those moments divine suggestions come, the right prayer comes from God as well as goes to Him. It is, in fact, His way of conversing with us."

Once more I can find nothing parallel with this but John Knox's magnificent description of "the earnest and familiar talking with God." One may be quite sure Laurence did not get it from John Knox, with whose ideal he would have imagined himself to have no sympathy whatever, but direct from the understanding of the devout heart. Here is another fine apprehension of that more magnanimous view of Christian work and recompense which was dear to those visionary souls :—

"I was thinking to-day, darling, how it would help us, to realise that all pleasures, joy, and happiness must never be considered except as being the accident of service. The mistake of the popular theology is that it makes people desire their salvation for its own sake, instead of its being the accident of our working for other people. It seems very hard upon God that He cannot invest His service with delight without our having a tendency to drop the service and appropriate the delight. We have thus got into the habit of putting the cart before the horse. . . . We are not forbidden to enjoy intensely the pleasure He attaches to the fulfilment of our highest duties; but the love of those highest duties must be greater than that of the delight which they impart."

He returns again and again to the importance of her mission both to himself and to the world:—

"I felt a little uneasy and sad about something, probably my own evils and the low state from which I am unable to rise into a nearer union with God. It is so hard to keep the interior part of one where it should be, all the time one is in the world; and it often makes me feel very unhappy to think that I am not more spiritual and conscious of divine influences. Then I think, selfishly, if I had you to help me I should rise higher, and get from your strength and support what no one else could give. By degrees you would come to know all my weak points, for my whole desire would be that you should know where I fail, and what my most secret and insidious faults are."

Speaking again of former religious movements, he adds:—

"There is a particular feature in them—the women played no part, or scarcely any at all;

and this I believe to be the chief reason of their failure. And this is why, my own darling, I cherish you so for humanity's sake, because I believe that when you come into child-states, and thus become susceptible to the divine influence, which cannot reach you while the old selfhood bars the door, you will become conscious of deep inner truths, not perhaps convertible into language, before at all events they have borne fruit into acts, and these may be the basis of the new feminine part of the religious structure." The battle, he adds, will be made easier for her by the preliminary work of others in America, and "especially when you recognise the fact that you are engaged in a stupendous work of religious and moral reform, which is destined by its irresistible, if slow and painfully developed, influence to penetrate the hardness of the world's selfishness. It will take a long time; we may never live to see it. But I feel as sure as of my own existence that the future of the human race lies in the hands of the members of it; that it is by no apparently miraculous interposition that its regeneration is to be accomplished, but by the steady undermining of the principle of selfish love, which holds everything in an iron grasp now, by the more powerful principle of martyr love; and the whole of what is called the scheme of redemption lies in the hint which Christ's life and death gave us of this great truth."

One cannot but feel a curious sense of the strange misapprehension mingling with so much fine spiritual perception, which could make Laurence think his own struggles to maintain the impossible rule of his creed in respect to marriage, and his bride's conflict with her relations as to the disposal of her money, to be carrying out the "hint" contained in the life and death of the divine example of all martyrdoms. This is the thread of weakness throughout; but it is not without parallel in the reflections of many deeply religious minds, unable to perceive the enormous difference of magnitudes, or to believe how little more than personal at the best, if not purely fantastic, some of these struggles were. This, however, is to be taken here only as a parenthesis. He has more to say of the woman's share in the religious work which he believes to be before her, —indeed the letters are full of this subject, which recurs again and again:—

"I am feeling more and more the need of your teaching, things that you alone in the world can teach me. My whole nature is standing still till I can learn through you what the woman through her 'word' alone can teach. I feel this more and more every day. It will not be from your brain or through your intellect, darling, that those deeper knowledges which I am thirsting for will come, and those truths which, when I have assimilated them, will give me new power for influencing my fellow-creatures. If in some things you are my child, in others I have got to become yours; and this is the moment I am longing for, when I can drink in and absorb from you the mysteries of a love which the world knows nothing of yet—when I can learn from you what I can never find out by myself. This is why I want you to press on, not because I want this moment selfishly to come, but because it will enable us both to come into our uses; and I feel and know I shall be so much more powerful for good in the world. Only believe this to be the case, do not reason about it, take it for granted for the time, that you have it in your power to work out these wonders in my organism, almost to change and renew it, to double all my powers and faculties: and whether you understand it or not, the thought may be a stimulus to you, and may prevent you from losing ground by doubts. I tell you this, darling, in order that you may feel the additional responsibility as an additional reason for keeping down the part of your nature that you have been accustomed to respect and rely upon. It is just the other part that you have never developed that I respect and rely upon, and you can only develop this in the degree in which you keep the other back. The great dual principle of the world is love and wisdom, and the latter can only be developed through the former. The intellect is entirely dependent upon the affections. Good comes first, truth afterwards. Moral truth cannot be discovered by a bad man, and hence the only way to obtain it is through developing the emotional and intuitive faculties of our nature."

Whether Miss le Strange had any difficulty in accepting the supremacy of the spiritual leader so warmly and tenderly, yet with so many deprecations, pressed upon her, there is no evidence to show. She did accept the postponement of the marriage with a sweet and humble acquiescence for which he thanks her with enthusiasm; and she wrote to the autocrat, putting herself in his hands, and unfolding the secrets of her pure spirit without any signs of reluctance, as was required from her. What is apparently the *brouillon* of this letter is enclosed with the correspondence from which I have quoted, and I extract from it a few passages to show how this clear and beautiful spirit yielded to the yoke :—

"When W. told me yesterday to write to you and ask you for that help which I have learned to know you will give me, it was at first difficult for me to tell whether the hesitation I felt came more from the sense of the impertinence there might be in forcing myself with all my wants before you, or from the irrevocable and solemn nature of the plunge I should be making into engagements that I had felt and professed myself willing to undertake, but had not till that moment had the courage to invoke. A few moments showed me that my cowardice on my own account was greater than my scruple on yours. And you will, I trust, forgive me for acting upon this conviction, and trying to tell you why I appeal to you."

Then follows an account of the spiritual difficulties of many years, which were principally caused by extreme horror of and pity for the suffering in the world, and inability to understand how a God of love and goodness could permit it to be—difficulties which had driven her to doubts of God's existence, or at least of His benevolence, had made her for a long time incapable of prayer, and weighed her down with a miserable sense of impotence in the face of all those problems of sorrow and pain. She did, however, she tells Mr Harris, endeavour to do what she could for others; but always with the intolerable doubt whether there was any good in it, or if her exertions were of the least use. She was also hampered by another fact, which she states with delightful *naïvété*:—

"I could not see my way clear, or feel sure whether I was doing more harm than good half the time that I worked for others, and a very great difficulty grew in me that I hardly knew how to combat rightly; it was, that the great love that grew up around me among all the people with whom I came in habitual contact made it almost impossible to test the purity of my desire to do right, or to know how far I was independent of this flow of approbation and affection, that made it seem so much easier than of old to be working for others."

The beautiful soul, so wrapped round in admiration and love that she could scarcely believe in her own disinterested charity, is a rare spectacle in this world; and it is seldom that such a being opens her lips, almost with a soft complaint of this flattering atmosphere of universal sunshine, and of all the influences that worked together to raise in her the noble discontent of a new spiritual life. She goes on :—

"And so I came to know W., and saw for the first time some one who not only held the highest views I had ever imagined on the subject of our responsibilities, but had found it possible to work them out into a life much purer and more full of use than anything I had thought compatible with the human nature I had seen around me. I was beginning to take in the idea of how that life had become possible to him and to others, when I began also to know that I was ceasing to feel for him the mere respect and distant affection with which the great beauty of his nature had inspired me. I was horribly disturbed, knowing that to go forward without feeling ready to fight in the same battle, reckless of consequences, with him, would be doing a wicked wrong to him; and yet not knowing how I should tell whether or not the increased willingness I felt to devote my life to this ceaseless labour was fed by the personal feeling. It was a different difficulty from any I had dealt with yet, for love for others, which had guided me before, was this time bound up with that new vision of a possible happiness to myself; and I was at a loss, in a way I had never been before, to know what was right and what was wrong, while this terrible fear hung over me, that I might be imperilling the happiness of the only man of whom I had ever felt that I could love him rightly. So I ventured in this strait to pray for power not to do wrong; and from that moment the doubt was taken away, and without quite foreseeing what was going to be, I went about with a calm and even conviction that all would come right in its own way, and that I need not be afraid. I was never in all my life so thankful for anything as for the sense of an answer to my prayer for knowledge how to do and feel right. So learning gradually from W. how he had been taught to serve, I glided into the moment when I pledged myself to serve side by side with him, and, like him, without counting the cost.

"And now I must make a clean breast to you, as he has told me to do, of the bad thing in me that I had to fight, so soon as I realised the completeness of the discipline I must be willing to undergo. There is no kind or quality of work that I could ever feel it much of a trial to do; the sense of possessing property as a thing personal to myself is one I have never hugged, having lived through so many times when the power or the ease that people associate with it were all so impotent to affect me. And I have gradually for some years been keeping more and more aloof from prejudices among my friends that had a tendency to hamper my right action, so that I can face, without any very pressing anxiety, the dislike they may feel to my working out my life in a way of which the strangeness will alarm them; while the hope of being allowed to join in an organised combination of effort for living in pure goodness and working for others, is so blessed and unlooked-for a change from the hopelessness of permanent results in which I have struggled on till now, that I could not waver for a moment in my desire to be allowed to make myself fit for joining it. One only thing has been a terrible pang to me, the giving over of my own judgment in questions of moral judgment to any human authority. It is so absolutely new and incomprehensible an idea to me, that any outer test should supplant, without risk to itself and to me, the inner test of my actions that my conscience affords, that when—seeing the impossibility of working successfully with others without giving practical proof that I can obey without criticism of the command, I decided to shut my eyes and leave the seeing to you—I felt as though I were putting out the one clear light that had been given to me for my guidance, and that I had been living so many years to God to purify; as though I had suddenly thrown my own compass overboard, and was left with my whole life exposed to the chances of a sea of uncertainty, and with the grim question asking itself over and over again in my heart, whether I were not doing wrong? I answered myself, at first more mechanically than with any conviction, that anyhow one thing in me was assuredly wrong, the want of humility that added the sting to the anxiety, and that, in some way I could not quite yet understand, the only thing by which I could break this pride in pieces must end in being right. So I am dealing to the best of my present powers with this mischief, asking for patience when the wonder at not understanding comes over me, and settling always to some work to keep my strength afloat when the danger comes. And I tell you of it, that you may learn all I can find to say of the weakness and faults that will want what help you will give them, and not because you shall ever find in me any but the most absolute submission both in deed and will. I hope and believe I shall have bruised even this inward resistance long before it could run the risk of throwing upon you or any one else any part of the suffering which ought to belong only to me.

"So now I ask to put myself and ourselves under your direction in all matters. You will determine what proof we must acquire to ourselves that we hold our happiness in absolute fief to our duty; in what manner, when you think it well, we shall inaugurate the joining of our lives; and the degree in which we can usefully comply with or disregard the prejudices of my family and friends on the subject of performing the marriage ceremony, and disposing of the property belonging to me."

She ends by stating the amount of this last, and that some of it was invested in America, "so that I will, on receiving your instructions, make my part of that easily payable to you for any purpose to which you might see fit to apply it." In accordance with the intention here expressed, I am authorised to say that the whole of her property was placed unreservedly in the hands of Mr Harris, with the result which her family had anticipated.

This extraordinary letter of course disposes of the assertions often afterwards made by both, that their subjection to Harris, and his command of their property and actions, were merely the authority of superior wisdom and love over grateful and affectionate disciples, — the power of suggestion, which, through their sympathy and perfect trust, became acceptable to their own thoughts, and led them to resolve and do, from their own impulse and will, what he had put into their minds in the shape of loving advice. Yet there was enough of truth in it, I imagine, to justify to themselves these assertions; for it was their first endeavour to make the will of this absolute friend their own, and so to bring themselves into subjection to it, that its dictates might in a sense be considered as their own actions, freely inspired and adopted. The sophistry of such statements was either unconscious, or they felt it one of those offices of filial love which devoted children sometimes take up, assuming the responsibility upon their own shoulders, of a step of doubtful policy recommended by their parents, rather than allow them to bear the blame. The following letter from Laurence to his betrothed will show exactly what he thought in this respect. Their marriage, as has been seen, had been arbitrarily delayed, after it had been decided upon, by letters from America, and they were for some time left in doubt whether it might not be broken off altogether; notwithstanding which, he warmly approves of her determination to describe the postponement to her family as arising from "no outward dictation, but from the results of our own experiences."

"The more responsibility of this sort we can take off Father the better. He has only been obliged to appear dictatorial to those who were unable to act for themselves, either from weakness or blindness; but he desires nothing more than that we should decide all these things for ourselves, and it would not surprise me at all for him to say that we are able to get our life from above without asking him as to how the next step is to be taken; and it would be so satisfactory to be able to answer those who accuse him of tyranny, and us of a blind and servile obedience, by saying that from first to last we have acted not under his dictation but according to the promptings of our own consciences, and independently of any one. Of course, if in doubt, we might ask his advice; but you see he explains in his letter there is never any question of surrendering one's private judgment. It seems to me self-evident that the man who had hit upon the great idea not of attempting to apply Christianity in its literal and practical working to the existing conditions of society, but fundamentally to change these conditions so as to make Christianity practicable in society, required a certain amount of obedience from those who agreed to try the experiment with him without having his light as to how it was to be done."

I do not say that this piteous plea of the vassal soul is a thing to be admired, or even without a little difficulty excused, in a man so honourable and high-minded as Laurence Oliphant. It is one of the things so extraordinary as to be incredible if it were not actually and undeniably true. But the vague sophistry of the argument, the desperate clinging at all costs to the spiritual despot, and the pathetic anxiety to justify him and take all the blame that may follow upon their own shoulders, is touching as well as intolerable. The ineffable infatuation, folly, or faith which breathes in the peradventure, "It would not surprise me at all for him to say that we are able to get our life from above without asking him," is far beyond the reach of poetic invention. The most daring dramatist would scarcely venture to put such an utterance into a human mouth.

And this almost fatuous veneration and admiration was called forth by a man who, the speaker well knew, was like enough to inspire his refined and delicate Alice with little personal sympathy, and who, even to himself, was perhaps more love-inspiring at a distance than close at hand. One of his strongest desires was to persuade Harris to visit him in Paris; yet of this, though he looked forward to it as an honour and delight, he spoke as follows :—

"Father's presence is an awful pressure, though it is a blessed one. Because he feels our states so terribly, the watchfulness over ourselves has to be unceasing. So it should be always; but somehow I am so miserably finite, and I do not realise the divine presence checking me so much as the human one."

Hence, by that subtle influence of "feeling their states so terribly," the prophet kept them in awed subjection while in his presence, as well as absolute obedience out of it—a sway scarcely comparable to any other tyranny known to man.

The same sort of sophistry, justified by a reasoning more or less Jesuitical, yet not absolutely untrue, occurs in the following letter to Mr Hamon le Strange on the subject of his sister's fortune, written after the marriage :—

"I observe from your letter to Alice that you are under an entire misapprehension in regard to my financial position in America. I do not now, and never have belonged to any company or community in that country in any other sense than that of living among people I like. There are no deeds of partnership or written agreements of any sort or kind existing between us, much less involving any joint liability for debt. So far as property goes, we are neighbours and nothing more. If I have not held my property in my own name, it was not because it did not absolutely belong to me, but because, as a foreigner, I could not hold it; and I was fortunate enough to have friends I could trust, who held it for me. . . . The notion that I belong to a society which has all things in common, or that I approve of the principle of depriving the owners of property of the privileges, duties, or responsibilities attaching to it, is one of the many false statements accumulated and believed on no better foundation than that of common rumour, which has constructed a fabric of most incredible falsehood and fiction as to what we do and what we believe, and which the love of newspaper gossip has spread far and wide.

"At the same time, the views which I hold in regard to the necessity of social and moral reform in the world, and the possibility of carrying them out — which Alice, after a thorough and careful investigation, fully shares — are not commonly entertained, partly because they are not known or understood, partly because they are not theoretical but practical, and partly because the prejudice is very firmly rooted in the world that any attempt to improve it is Utopian—all attempts hitherto in that direction having failed. One principle which I think thoroughly unsound in the law of England is that which treats women as mere chattels, and deprives them on marriage of any right to hold property. I could not agree to Alice dispossessing herself of that faculty which the law of America recognises, and in respect to which there was a recent debate in the House of Commons, which I consider as involving a principle in regard to women's social status which is the foundation of any reform of the present social system. . . . You will now, I hope, understand that any property which, in accordance with American law, I make over by deed to Alice as her own separate and distinct possession, is hers now and in the event of my death, without liability of any kind or sort; while besides, in accordance with my strongest feelings of what is due to her, I insist upon her remaining absolute mistress of all she inherited from her father, and investing it as she pleases. Beyond this, she has a right to a third of the rest of my property should I die; but her chance of what this may amount to depends, as in the case of any other American wife, upon the success of my financial undertakings. In regard to this, I can only say that I hold it as the sacred duty of every man to invest his capital in such a careful way as may give him the best power to do his duty by his fellow-men."

The most careful way of investing his property so that he might do his duty by his fellow-men was, in the eyes of Laurence, to place it under the administration of Mr Harris in the little domain at Brocton; and the freedom of Alice to dispose of her money as she thought fit, meant also, as has been seen, the placing of it in the same hands. Nevertheless, as it was possible at a later period to reclaim this property, or part of it, it must have been a fact that Laurence at least retained a claim to the land he had bought. So that by a bewildering possibility of argument both things were true—the first, that he had bought land in America, and held it as his own; and the other fact, that everything he had was in the hands of Harris. Few men thus fight for the power of depriving themselves of their property, yet, by a twist of the Scriptural precept not to let their right hand know what their left hand does, conceal the self-sacrifice under a pretence of profitable investment. But yet one would have preferred that there should have been no double meaning, and that the spirit being so, the letter should not have been strained to convey a different impression to uninstructed ears.

I must not omit a curious accidental light thrown by this correspondence on the attitude of Laurence long before, at the time of his first connection with Harris, which has been already referred to. While he is exhorting his betrothed to think less of the intellectual qualities of her nature and to cultivate quietness, and even the possibility of being considered dull and stupid (he might as well have said ugly and awkward, both being impossible), "It would do you no harm," he says, "to go through a little course of this"—

"Just as I did during the first two sessions when I went into the House of Commons, and my friends thought I was going to electrify the House and the country—when I was forbidden to open my lips, and finally was set down as a parliamentary failure, it having been the ambition of my life to be a parliamentary success, and I being conscious that I had it in me to be one, if I were only allowed to try."

What enormous responsibility the man took upon himself who ventured to give such commands! and how inconceivable is the submission which a man like Laurence, eager for every kind of distinction, full of capacity, having just attained the position he had looked forward to for years, gave to the obscure Swedenborgian preacher, the uncultured American, who thus assumed over him the authority of God Himself. The act of submission above quoted of a second brilliant and impatient intellect, full of independent sentiment, almost wilful in the previous stages of her development, adds to the wonder with which we contemplate this extraordinary submission. It seems impossible to believe that a mere vulgar impostor could ever have gained such an ascendancy; and more respectful to these two disciples, as well as to the others who submitted to his sway, is the supposition that Harris, at least at this stage, was no impostor at all, but believed in his own mission, as well as that he must have been endowed with extraordinary and imposing gifts of character to give him such power. But the possession of power like this, so much beyond that which should be intrusted to any man, must be more demoralising to the holder of it than to its subjects. They suffered earthly loss, and were subjected to much keen and some contemptuous criticism, but with this compensation, that their extraordinary sacrifices and renunciations gained them a unique position in the world, and surrounded them with interest and sympathy wherever they went; whereas their prophet could do nothing but fall, fall from his high estate into the abyss where broken idols and exploded pretensions must infallibly go.

The objections of Miss le Strange's family were finally set aside, and the marriage took place eventually with no breach of the natural ties of affection, though without any formal approval or sanction from her relations. The objections of the community in America, and specially of its head, were more difficult to overcome; but that too was at last accomplished: and in June 1872 the marriage of Laurence Oliphant and Alice le Strange took place at St George's, Hanover Square. It is impossible to enter into other circumstances of this union, which make it more remarkable still than all that had gone before, but which belong entirely to the privacies of individual life. There were, as the reader will see after, breaches and troubles in it which involved much suffering, through the direct influence of the authority to which both had bound themselves; but the bond was always one of the purest affection and complete sympathy, and it ended as it began, in beautiful and perfect union.

Laurence retained his position as correspondent of the 'Times' for more than a year after this happy event, and I think that the entire period of his residence in Paris was a bright and pleasant chapter in his much-diversified career. His influence was considerable and his popularity great, and his knowledge of everybody who was worth knowing in Parisian society gave him great advantages, both political and social. I understand that it was through his representations that the annoyances of the passport system were finally given up; and he told me himself a curious story of a proposal made to him on the part of M. Thiers, who was anxious to secure the support of the 'Times' at almost any price, to which Laurence responded that the way to secure the support of the 'Times' was to make the Government measures known to its representative, and to secure his approval—which on these conditions he would not fail to express publicly. There was a certain amount of jest in the story as he told it; but there can be no doubt that he was much consulted by M. Thiers, and that the half in jest of such an anecdote is often whole in earnest to those who know.

There is another delightful and characteristic anecdote of this period which must be told, though I am a little uncertain about dates. A revolutionary meeting was about to be held at Lyons, concerning which considerable alarm was entertained, and of which Laurence was anxious to be able to indicate the tendency and real danger or futility. He had apparently thought it of sufficient importance to go down to Lyons, on purpose to see what could be seen. The prefect, to whom he went on his arrival, advised him strongly against attending it, and finally declared that he must take the responsibility on himself, as he, the prefect, could not undertake to guarantee the safety even of his life. But this was no reason against the enterprise for Laurence, to whom at all times "the danger's self was lure alone." He went accordingly, and gained admittance among the crowd; but just as the proceedings were beginning some one got wit of his presence, and rising, warned the assembly that an emissary from that brutal English journal the 'Times' was among them. An immediate tumult arose, and cries of "Cherchons-le! à la mort! à la rivière!" resounded. As may be supposed, Laurence immediately joined himself to the demonstrators, jumping to his feet in overwhelming indignation, and shouting with the best. "Cherchons-le! cherchons-le!" he cried; "moi, je le connais de vue!" He got out safely, it is scarcely needful to say, under cover of this zeal for his own discovery. An acute critic suggests in respect to this story that his accent would at once have betrayed him; but certainly in the excitement of the moment Laurence was not the man to think of such a risk, and perhaps there were Englishmen—or at least foreigners—among the democrats of Lyons, as there are in most places under the sun.

There is also a curious story, which was related to me in much detail by a very competent authority, which tells how Laurence, being present at a *séance* given by a then well-known medium in Paris, was somehow fascinated by the man's looks, supposing he must have met him before, so familiar did his face appear. Though this did not prove to be the case, he got into conversation with the medium, and walking part of the way home with him, was persuaded to go into the rooms of his new acquaintance, where he remained for some time talking over their mutual experiences of the unseen, which always interested him so strongly. At last the medium seemed to recollect something which accounted for the sense of previous acquaintance in both their minds. "Now that I think," he said, "I have surely come across your name in some way not long ago. Let us look if it was among these letters," and he brought out a number of letters, which he laid upon the table at which they were sitting. Laurence, who had long ceased to have any faith in spiritual manifestations of this kind—that is to say, that he believed them to be spiritual phenomena indeed, but produced by the lowest and basest of earth-haunting spirits—turned the letters over with languid curiosity, until startled by finding a letter to himself addressed in the handwriting of his father, who had been dead for nearly twenty years! The story is a thrilling one; but there is no doubt, had such a startling proof of the reality of any medium's pretensions been genuine, the world would have heard it in all details. It is a specimen of the fabulous legends that accumulate around any history in which the occult and unseen are touched, in whatever way.

In 1873, as abruptly as before, and in consequence of a summons from America, the household was broken up, the post abandoned, and the family, consisting of Lady Oliphant, Laurence, and his wife, suddenly departed from Paris, and set out across the Atlantic for the home at Brocton, from whence the guidance of all their actions came.

CHAPTER X.

LABOUR AND SORROW—DISENCHANTMENT.

It was in the summer of 1873 that Laurence returned to the settlement at Brocton, to the little community immersed in farm-work and daily toil, with his mother, who knew what awaited her there, and his beautiful young wife, who did not know. Whether the others felt their hearts sink when they took Alice into that strange sphere, or whether they were too secure in her faith and enthusiasm to fear anything, I cannot tell; but one would imagine that the actual entry into a form of existence so entirely unknown to her must have been attended—at least to those who were her guides and leaders, and especially to her husband, who had first directed her thoughts thither, and held it before her as the haven and resting-place from all trouble—with much tremor and searchings of heart. The almost apologetic explanation which

Laurence had already made of the "rough and simple life," of "Father's" complete ignorance of the usages of society, &c., show that he himself was by no means assured of the effect it would produce upon his wife. Of all this, however, we have no record.

Neither can I give, nor would it be possible to give if I could, any further picture of the community and actual circumstances which awaited the pilgrims. But I may here quote a letter written by Mr Harris himself, which has been lent to me, and which gives a description of, at all events, the exterior circumstances of the community. It was written in answer to an article upon Brocton which had appeared in a New York paper. In the beginning of this letter he protests, as any English gentleman might do, against the tricks of the newspaper correspondents, who thrust themselves upon him, and spied upon all his proceedings, which is one point upon which he will have the reader's full sympathy. But he goes on to give a succinct account of himself, which is interesting, and in which he assumes the attitude of a man withdrawn from the world, yet profoundly sensitive to every prick and touch of vulgar contact. "They are especially painful," he says, "at the present moment, when, having been relieved of my various trusts for others, I have withdrawn into private life." The date is 8th February 1871, so that, whatever the trusts were from which he had been relieved, his position in respect to his own immediate society was still that which we have seen. "As our beloved country," he continues, "sinks daily into deeper profligacy and corruption, and the press becomes more infernal, I shrink more and more from that contact which is caused by publicity. Experience has taught me that this generation is only to be saved by the chastisements and just judgments of God."

"I will only say here for you (but not for the public), that there is here no 'community'; every friend controls his own property and manages his own affairs. Some of the brothers carry on business on their individual account; others in co-operation or partnership. There is no unity other than that which is the result of mutual assistance in seeking to fulfil the requirements of a pure self-denying life. So of creeds and covenants. There is no external bond of religious union; . . . the spiritual influences that in earlier times wrought out the cloister and cathedral now work into finance and political economy, with mechanics and agriculture, with whatever promotes the social wellbeing of mankind. Hence I am content, as a reformer and religious teacher, to be merely a business man.

"The Church must become secular if it would be a saving power. When I became convinced that my proceedings and writings, if continued, would result in a new sect, I shrank appalled from the sin and curse of adding a new 'Ism' to the others, and determined that, God helping me, I would simply 'Live the life,' and try to help others to do the same. Beginning on this basis of unselfishness, and filled with the one thought, 'Christianity must be lived as a social life,' friends gathered round me unsought, asking to become members of my family, and interested in my pursuits. Since 1860 I have carried out these ideal principles in their application to a world of practical affairs. My friends to whom I imparted my thoughts and methods, and the spirit in which they originated, are embodying them here, in Europe, in Asia — preaching not with words but with works. Finally, this phase of my life being ended, I retire from human co-operation with my friends, that they may acquire the power that comes from that independent exercise of gifts. Each of them grasping the enlarged function, goes on to become trained in social use, and so to attract and to impart to others.

"If you should pass this way, you will find, if you need refreshment, that my restaurant at Brocton Junction has a reputation for pure food and drink, and for moderate charges, not surpassed between Chicago and New York. If you stay one night, the Salem-on-Erie hotel, close at hand, will give you, under a modest roof, all the pure kindness and comfort of a home.

"If you step into the nurseries and greenhouses close by, you will see the Gospel in fair vines or multitudinous flowers; while in the neighbouring wine-vaults you can taste from 10,000 gallons of pure wine of last year's vintage, absolutely free from any foreign or deleterious elements. This comprises the bulk of my business at this place. Your old friend B—— resides within half a mile, and you will find him prompt, practical, and kindly as ever, busy with flocks and herds, with grape-vines and a public laundry, which he practically oversees.

"Our genius, in fine, old friend, is domestic, and delights in quiet privacy. We eschew all notoriety. We never proselytise. In this world, nothing in the long-run, nothing tells but work. The homely actual receives and hides the shining ideal, as the splendours and warmth of summer are reborn in humble plants and springing grass. Yet doubtless the ideal will in time transform the actual to its own image. 'For now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.'

"I came in wearied from overseeing my men pressing hay in bales, and seeing the article in the [New York] 'World,' sat down to express my regret at its appearance."

This modest version of the life of the prophet and his friends is strangely unlike the shadow of the community as seen through the letters of Laurence to his betrothed bride. The autocrat who, across the breadth of the Atlantic, issued his orders to marry or not to marry to his faithful disciple: to whom the new member was impelled and besought to write offering absolute obedience, and placing her property at his disposal; the "Father," whose presence was a "terrible pressure, though a blessed one"—appears in a very different guise from this benevolent patriarch with his flocks and herds, his vintages and his "friends." Yet it must be remarked that Laurence, too, used the same enigmatical and metaphorical expressions when speaking of him, asserting his own independence both in respect to life and money. It is difficult to reconcile the two points of view—it is not, indeed, I fear, possible, except by those principles of mental reservation and equivocal statement which one is grieved to find in the utterances of honourable men. Laurence no doubt considered himself justified by his strong conviction that the commands of Harris were not of himself but from God, and that, in the same way, the money confided to the prophet was directly in the hands of Providence. How Mr Harris justified to himself the discrepancy between the exoteric and esoteric view is another question. It must also be remembered that in the latter case there was some legal safeguard by which afterwards it was possible to reclaim the property,—which is so much in favour of the external claim of independence, if it were not contradicted by every word and thought of the correspondence quoted in the previous chapter.

We might easily form imaginary pictures of the arrival of the party in this practical little community, so entirely occupied with its vines, its corn, its flocks, its hay, and all the matter-of-fact work which was practically its gospel to the world. How helpless must the two ladies have felt, who knew nothing of these things, and especially the young and inexperienced disciple, to whom everything was new, and who brought the glamour of enthusiasm in her eyes to see a use beyond that of all her previous knowledge in the homely necessities of existence, the work of the household, for which alone (and that so badly at first) she would be qualified. How they must have been in the way of the busy workers, how little their true gifts and capabilities could have been wanted, in what elementary labours they must at first have been employed! I have heard great indignation expressed over the fact that Lady Oliphant washed the pocket-handkerchiefs of the settlement—indignation in which I scarcely feel able to share. For that being the way of salvation, what better could the poor lady do? She could not superintend the pressing of hay into bales, or the cultivation of the vine; and as for Alice, it is impossible to imagine what she could have been good for at first, except for offices which any little untrained housemaid could have done better. They had no time to hear her talk, or to listen to her music; they knew nothing of the books, the people, the thoughts which had occupied her life. Had Laurence married a devout dairymaid, it would have been far more to the purpose: that he should have brought so fair a flower of perfect civilisation and ladyhood among this bustling rustic community must have been embarrassing on all hands. To be sure, there were one or two English ladies there before her; but in the case of each of these, no doubt, as in hers, not only was the first step a terrible one to themselves, but (to do justice on all sides) a most troublesome one to the organisers of all those untrained and unaccustomed candidates for work.

It is, however, quite unnecessary to make fancy pictures of these difficulties. Lady Oliphant herself gives a simple record of their occupations a little later on; and in the meantime it would appear from the letters of Laurence that he and his wife were at first permitted a period of holiday with little or nothing exacted from them. I am enabled to trace through his letters to Mr Blackwood something of the second beginning made by him of life in Brocton under his new circumstances. It is, however, a mistake to speak of his life in Brocton, for though called back there for the service of the community, he was not allowed to be more than an occasional visitor in the place where his wife and mother were established. He would seem to have plunged almost at once into commercial affairs in New York. The farm-labourer phase was over,—not even a divinely inspired autocrat could think of putting him through that discipline again; and financial operations of one kind or other would seem to have been the occupation determined on as most suitable for him — operations which, as the reader will see, did not at all prepossess him in favour of the New York commercial world. The first letter I find is as follows. That it was written not very long after his arrival, is whimsically indicated by the stamp on his paper of "Parkins and Gotto." He had not exhausted, it would appear, the stock brought with him.

"BROCTON, CHAUTAUGUA, 22*d Sept.* [1873].

"I ought to have written to you before to have thanked you for the cheque you were so good as to send me, but I was in hopes of being able to enclose in my acknowledgment of your liberality another article. Somehow I have not been able to manage it, as my time has been so much cut into. I have been spending three weeks on Long Island, at a lovely spot about thirty miles from New York, and the manners and customs of the natives afforded material, especially as there was a camp-meeting and a revival going on in the immediate neighbourhood, where I saw a young woman perform spiritual gymnastics that would have beaten Marie Alacoque; and indeed, if people are going to make pilgrimages to every place where parties are cutting what appear supernatural capers, they will have their hands full. All this was suggestive of a good deal, but I wanted quiet, as it is a subject which pretty soon lands one out of one's depth. Moreover, I was fishing, boating, bathing, and otherwise putting my wife and myself into robust conditions; added to which, perpetual journeys down the loveliest of island waters into that den of gamesters New York, where I fished up some Wall Street experiences that may also some day be worked up with other phenomena, supernatural, diabolic, &c., of the times. Since I was there, indeed the day I left, some of the scoundrels began to smash, and I trust they may continue to do so until not one dollar is left standing on another. The special occupation which my destiny leads me for the moment to follow is in the midst of these ruffians. There I have to make money, and see if it can be done cleanly. Meantime I have come back here for a breath of pure air, and I may possibly go hence to Canada before returning to New York. My mother and wife are both very well, and desire me to give their kindest regards to yourself and Mrs Blackwood. The latter is very happy, and says she finds here at Brocton all she came for, and enjoys the general novelty and brightness of American life."

The next letter is entirely occupied with his commercial experiences:—

"The moral side of this financial crisis is most curious. There is scarcely an instance of a prominent fraudulent bankrupt who has not made a show of piety the mask under which he ensnared his victims. X—— G——, for instance, has got an island on Lake Erie specially devoted as a sanatorium to invalid parsons, who are kept there free of expense on condition that they force his 'wild-cat' railway bonds down the throats of their congregations, and so on in every instance. Presidents of Young Men's Christian Associations, founders of theological seminaries, Sunday-school teachers, secretaries to charitable associations, and the leading elders of various denominations are among the principal defaulters. I was thinking of showing it all up in the 'Times,' but have been too busy. Fortunately, so far I have kept clear of the hypocrites, and feel comparatively safe among the professional scoundrels.

"I read Marshall's article on France, and thought it excellent. I also see his book very well spoken of in the papers."

We have now a double thread of narrative to follow, and I may here trace the course of the other, which from this time was almost completely severed from that of Laurence, whose errant career led him from one place to another

—to New York, to Canada (the only occasion on which his wife accompanied him), and even repeatedly to England, as the claims of business and the orders of the Prophet required. On one of these latter occasions he had been seen in London by the daughter of his old friend, Mr Liesching, who apparently wrote to Lady Oliphant in consequence. I quote her reply :—

"She must have been struck, as every one is who sees him, with the change his opinions have effected in Lowry, both spiritually and physically. He is indeed a new creature, and lives only to serve God and humanity, having no desire or aim for self. He looks strong, and is so, and his expression shows the calm and strength within; but all this comes not from faith without works, but after ten years of hard struggle with his evils, and very hard bodily labours, and no small amount of suffering. As for myself, I can say very little, but that I am struggling on to get rid of my selfhood and selfishness, and the rest of that vile tribe of evils, having so much to undo; but I am happy and thankful for the privilege of being in the only place where it is possible for me to be helped, and in due time, if I live, to help others. I am strong, and able for a fair amount of bodily exertion.

"You would be surprised and amused if I could describe to you the ordering of my daily life. Alice (Lowry's wife) has been going through the ordeal, a very hard one, of putting off all the old and much-admired refinement, polish, intellectual charm, &c. Not that these things are wrong,—on the contrary, they are most desirable, but only when coming through a divine source, and used for divine ends, instead of coming from the selfhood, and used for personal ends. She is very brave and true, and fights hard against herself. She and I lived together in a cottage for eight months, quite alone except for the help of a boy to do what was too hard for us, and that only about an hour in the day. It was our own wish: we wanted to realise something of the lives of our hard-working sisters in the world, the cooks, housemaids, &c., and to learn to do things for ourselves. I wish I could explain to you our beautiful system of Christ's religion,—I know it would meet a ready response in your honest loving nature: we cooked, we washed, we ironed, I reared upwards of a hundred chickens, and you may believe we were busy enough; but the internal work was by far the hardest, and I succeed but poorly and slowly. Alice helps me a great deal. Then when winter came on we were directed to come to this sweet home. It is the house Mr Harris occupied; he has gone to California with some of our members: we occupy his own rooms, and are merely boarders; all the housework is done by others of the family. We work in the garden, and help to mend the clothes of the gentlemen of the society. But we gained health of mind and body in our cottage experience. All we aim at is to become Christ-like, to get rid of selfhood in every form, so that He can use us as His instruments in helping to redeem the world, the work He has now come to do — for He has come, and been seen and heard of some, and soon all will feel His presence, for great and startling events are at hand."

It is a puzzle beyond ordinary faculties to make out in what respects Lady Oliphant and her daughter-in-law could be doing more good to the world by performing their household work for themselves in a little cottage in Salem-on-Erie than by living in their natural home, either in England or France; or how it was fundamentally better for these two accomplished women to live as boarders among the Brocton farmers, working in the garden, and mending the men's clothes, than to occupy their legitimate position. But this is no question for us, seeing that their own convictions on the matter were so absolute.

I cannot but think, however, that the clear intelligence and keen perceptions of Mrs Laurence Oliphant must soon have taken up this point of view, or else that the other circumstances of her life, upon which we have no light, gradually became too much for her. There is no record at first in her case of the ordeal through which both her husband and his mother had to pass at the very beginning of their career at Brocton. To put off her refinement and polish and intellectual charm, though extraordinarily difficult things to do, were not enough to balance the more practical and sensible tests to which the others were put; and it may be perhaps that the ordeal was postponed in her case only to be made more tremendous. Or I think it very possible that Harris himself may have been confused by the two extraordinary captives he had taken all unawares in his net, and foresaw and feared the consequences of leaving them there together to quicken each other's wits and powers of observation, and perhaps to discover with too much clearness of vision what was lacking and what was ludicrous in the economy around them. As iron sharpeneth iron, so were these two likely to act upon each other, perhaps to a consciousness of the wonderful character of their subjection, perhaps to independent plans of their own, both of which would have weakened the master's hold upon them, and made their emancipation merely a question of time.

Which of these varying reasons was the cause of the next step in this strange history it is impossible to tell. It is evident, however, that the separation of the husband and wife virtually took place before the departure of Alice from Brocton. It is comprehensible enough why Laurence should have been kept in perpetual motion, now here, now there, continually on the road. Having once entered into the cares of business, no doubt the exigencies of his new life forced him away from the quiet of the community in which his mother and wife lived in humility and apparent content. And as he was probably the most profitable of all the workers under the orders of the prophet, he was kept very fully occupied, and not encouraged to return too often to that quiet and seclusion. Brocton by this time, as has been seen, was no longer the place of Mr Harris's residence, though still completely under his sway. He had gone to California, and settled himself in a new establishment, Santa Rosa, not far from San Francisco, where he cultivated vines, and swayed the souls who had committed themselves into his hands, with an authority and minute direction as absolute as ever. For what alleged reason Alice was ordered to proceed to this new settlement I am unable to tell. She was so commanded, and with the unhesitating obedience to which she had pledged herself, arose and went, to fulfil the objects of the Use in that distant place. No part of the career of the Oliphants has been the cause of more question than this; but it was in no point more extraordinary, at least in the beginning, than the rest of their life under the sway of their prophet. We have already seen that he thought mutual affection, when merely natural, injurious. Accordingly he sent out the husband to work hard for the community in one direction, and called the wife to another sphere altogether out of her husband's reach except at the cost of a long journey. The mother, who had so rejoiced in the marriage, and who had written to her friend in England of her happiness in the cottage where they lived together, and where in spiritual matters as well as physical "Alice helps me so much," was left to wash the pocket-handkerchiefs and mend the clothes alone.

In the meantime Laurence, after his initiation into business matters among the bulls and bears of New York, took a more important piece of business in hand in the beginning of the year 1874, when he joined the new Cable Company, then anxiously contriving the means of establishing a new telegraphic service. He informs Mr Blackwood that he has just returned from Canada, where "we have been paying a visit to the Dufferins," in company with his wife—so that it is clear her exile to California had not as yet taken place.

"I am coaching a bill through the Dominion Legislature, which has for its object the extinction of the existing cable monopoly. My time has been so abundantly occupied in making preparations for the new cable which is to be laid this summer, and looking after the interests of the company, that I have sought in vain for some spare moments to write an article for 'Maga.' I have not been able even to fulfil my promise to Delane, and write a few columns for the 'Times,' though I have had material enough; but I find that when my attention is so fully taken up with affairs of which I had no previous experience, and which so completely divert my thoughts from their old wonted channels, I cannot get suddenly into the literary groove again. But, though rather late in life, I am learning business in a school which, as they say, requires one to keep one's 'eyes skinned,' and if you should want any sharp Wall Street practice exposed or moral detective work done, I am qualifying myself rapidly for the occupation. All the mysteries of 'Rings,' the fraudulent manipulation of stock, &c., are becoming familiar to me. I am at this moment making four contracts with four separate companies, all managed by—not to put too fine a point upon it—swindlers; at least according to my former unsophisticated mind I should so have considered them: they are only called *smart* here. My only weapon is a guileless innocence, which disconcerts them, as they don't know whether I am precious deep or precious flat, as Mr Chuckster would say."

The next letter is dated formally from the office of his new undertaking:—

"THE DIRECT UNITED STATES CABLE COMPANY, LIMITED,
NEW YORK, 16 BROAD STREET,
5th November 1875.

"You will see from the aspect of this sheet what an entirely new place I have broken out in. The manner in which I administer the affairs of a Cable Company, and exercise an autocratic control over an army of clerks and operators, is the marvel of myself and the admiration of the swindlers among whom I have the honour to reside. It is a long time since we have exchanged notes. I gave up attempting to get

'Piccadilly' republished here, concerning which I wrote to you last. My object in writing is to tell you that herewith I forward a copy of a New York paper, which, though mean and contemptible in aspect, has a circulation of over 200,000, and pays $25 a-column for my humble contributions, one of which the accompanying contains. As it is a review of that admirable book of Wilson's, 'The Abode of Snow,' I thought you might like to see it. I have to finish this in a hurry, as an overwhelming rush of business has come in upon me while I am writing. How did the cheap edition of 'Piccadilly' go off?"

His occupation with the concerns of the Cable Company lasted for some time. It would be foolish to take his sweeping condemnation of the financialists of New York *au pied de la lettre,* though no doubt his indignation and righteous wrath against the sharp practice to which he found himself exposed was very warm and genuine. But he was altogether a pessimist in respect to society, though the most hopeful of visionaries in other ways. I have been told an anecdote on this subject by a friend to whom he himself told it, which is not only very characteristic of him, but throws a gleam of softer light upon the men among whom he was struggling. One of the chief persons with whom he had to do was the well-known Jay Gould, a financier of much greater force than the new adventurer in such unaccustomed fields, and against whose overwhelming cleverness Laurence had been warned by his friends. In the exercise of that "innocence" to which he refers, which puzzled the gentlemen of Wall Street, he went direct to this high potentate with the engaging frankness which is one of the most polished instruments of diplomacy, being nothing but the bare truth. "I do not think," he said, "that your interests and those of my clients are opposed to each other; but it is needless to say that I am not your equal in the conduct of affairs, and if you mean to crush me, you can." The result of this address was that Jay Gould understood and appreciated the appeal of the honest man, and during the ensuing negotiations treated his unlikely opponent with perfect good faith and honour.

These unaccustomed business operations, and the work and strange company into which they led him, had closed the mouth of Laurence during the three years which followed his return to America. Except in the newspaper which looked so shabby, yet paid twenty-five dollars a-column to its contributors, we hear of nothing from his pen until in May 1876 we find him in England, writing from the Athenæum to his publisher at Edinburgh, with the MS. of an article afterwards published in 'Blackwood's Magazine' as "The Autobiography of a Joint-Stock Company." This daring and pungent piece of satire, which portrays the conception, growth, prosperity, and ruin of one of the many commercial ventures of the age, the shameless swindling of its promoters, the blind confidence of its victims, the lesser and competing frauds that gathered round it, was produced, I have been told, under the stimulus of sudden wrath and indignation consequent on the discovery of certain proceedings affecting his own immediate object. The story is altogether a perfect romance of literature.

He had spent the evening in the house of a lady very closely connected with him, in whom he had perfect confidence, and to whom he recorded in wild excitement the discovery of fraud which he had made. He talked until the small hours of the morning, no doubt still further feeding the fire of his indignation. Next day was Sunday, and the same lady, on her return from church, called at his lodgings to know if he was coming to lunch with her. She found him in his dressing-gown, standing before a table on which his hat-box answered the purpose of a desk, the floor all round him strewed with leaves of paper which he threw down as he finished them. There he had stood all the morning through, unconscious of the passage of the hours, pouring forth his fiery indignation and scathing satire, red-hot, with a lurid energy which comes only when the pen is inspired with strong feeling. My informant tells me that the paper completed was posted that same day. He told her afterwards, laughing, that the publisher had sent him a cheque for sixty pounds for the morning's work. Certainly an article more instinct with righteous wrath and the vivid life of just indignation was never written. "The facts," he says in an accompanying letter, "were all given me by C., who is certainly a joint producer; but we neither of us wish our names mentioned." The lady from whom I have this interesting description considers the date to have been later than that given above, and as I have already said, it is very difficult to decipher the chronology of a number of letters dated only by months. Certainly it was at a considerably later period that the article appeared.

The excitement of the struggles of business life roused all his faculties, and I have always heard that his capacity was great in financial matters. No doubt, too, a man so formed for activity of mental life enjoyed more or less the keen conflict of wits, more tremendous than any conflict of literature, in which each man has to keep his eye upon the other, lest he should be overreached and checkmated. But I do not think that Laurence entered upon any further commercial or speculative enterprise on so large a scale as the Cable Company. His experience in that did not tempt him to further exertions.

The story of the Joint-Stock Company did not appear for some time. And it was soon followed to Edinburgh by the witty and amusing "Recollections of Irene Macgillicuddy," in which, for the first time, the satirist had his fling at American society, with all the brilliancy and force of 'Piccadilly' and the freshness of a new scene. The sketch of Dollie, already referred to, was trenchant and whimsical enough; but the withers of New York were unwrung by that dashing stroke at the economy of a lower and altogether rural region. When, however, the New York belle appeared for the first time upon an English canvas, the effect was overwhelming. We have had many opportunities of making the acquaintance of that wonderful young person since. Her own native illustrator has taken in hand to expound her many vagaries and charms, and the manners and habits of the other beings of her species, which, moreover, have undergone many modifications, not perhaps wholly unconnected with those efforts of literature to hold the mirror up to nature. But Irene was entirely new to the world when Laurence called her before us. It was the beginning of the American girl's rage for aristocratic marriages — a taste which has grown so much since that day; and this curious sketch of manners, altogether new and wonderful, was made all the more striking by the introduction of the English young man of fashion, more or less bewildered by his new surroundings, who had suddenly become the natural prey of the fair American. But Irene needed no languid swell behind her to enhance her originality. In her first revelation, with all her beauty and charm and "go," her suppressed and half-conscious vulgarities, her *naïve* ambitions, her high-handed dealings with her parents, and unbroken conviction that the world was made for her, she was too new to be otherwise than delightful. The highly moral conclusion of the story, in which the disappointed beauty falls in love and marries disinterestedly, to the amazement of all around, is the only part of it which at all palled upon the reader. Even then the young lady was amusing, but in her unregenerate state she was sublime.

If, however, she was received with much jubilation and laughter in England, the effect upon society in New York was more remarkable still. The American reader identified the different characters of the story with that unhesitating certainty on which a local critic plumes himself, and ladies who had received the English satirist into their houses made the welkin ring with their cries. No harm was done, however, nor any special resentment roused. I have been told that one lady was overwhelmed with astonishment by the scene at Niagara where a declaration is made in the midst of the roar of the Falls; and declared indignantly that no one but herself and one other knew of this astonishing scene — to the great amusement of the writer, who had invented it in one of the wildest freaks of his fancy. This amusing production is the subject of Laurence's next letter to his publisher:—

"Brocton, *March* 25, 1878.

"The story has been republished in various forms in this country. Harpers have republished it in their Half Hour Series, for which they gave me £10; but have not had the grace to send me a copy, though I asked them to do so, intending to send you one. I have not even seen it. It has also been republished in a 15-cent form;

but I have not been following its fortunes much, or heard much of the criticism regarding it, as I have again gone into my retirement and given up the various occupations which kept me at New York. I am glad to give up the society of swindlers for that of sheep for a little. I have seen no newspapers for a couple of months, and do not therefore know anything which has been transpiring in Europe; but my impression is that the Russo-Turkish treaty will form a bone of contention over which all Europe will yet quarrel. Perhaps when that time comes I may pay Europe a visit; in the meantime, I shall remain quietly here."

He adds, "My mother and wife are both well," without any betrayal of the fact that his wife was far away from him; but the reader will not fail to perceive the tone of depression in this letter. He had but just returned from an expedition to California, the object of which, I believe, was to bring her back if possible; but in this he was unsuccessful, and there is something pathetic in the "society of sheep," to which he had returned sorely discouraged, and with many strange thoughts, one may imagine, surging up in his heart.

An account of the issue of this journey, and of the events subsequent to it which took place in the same neighbourhood, which I owe to the courtesy of Mr J. D. Walker, formerly of San Francisco, one of the most devoted and generous of Laurence Oliphant's friends, opens up suddenly an entirely new scene. The friendship between Laurence and Mr and Mrs Walker began in a characteristic manner. Mrs Walker, on her way to England with her children some years previously, travelling alone and in delicate health, was detained in New York for a short time by illness before embarking, and met Laurence there at a friend's house. He himself was also on his way to England, and hearing that the lady he had met was somewhat faint-hearted about the voyage—the first she had made without her husband—and generally in need of support and sympathy, he took his passage in the same ship, delaying his journey, I believe, in order that she might have the help of a friend on board. Thus he knitted to himself with hooks of steel, or rather with bonds of kindness, the pair who recompensed this spontaneous act of good feeling with the most faithful friendship and kindness for all the rest of his life. Some time in the beginning of the year 1878, Mr Walker found Laurence in his office in San Francisco waiting for him. He had come to see Mr Harris in his establishment at Santa Rosa; and though he did not inform his friend what was the special object of his visit, he accompanied Mr Walker to his hospitable house at San Rafael to await the issue of his negotiations with the head of the community. There he waited for some weeks, at first cheerful enough, probably unable to believe in the possibility of so rational and natural a demand as that to see his own wife being refused him. It was, however, refused: and he was ordered to return at once to Brocton, which he did in great depression and misery but ever-obedient faith. It may be supposed with what feelings the pair of friends, who did not yet know Alice, looked on and witnessed this inconceivable frustration of all the laws of nature.

Some time after, probably in the autumn of the same year, Laurence wrote to Mr Walker to tell him that his wife had left Santa Rosa, and was in need of friendly succour and help. She had gone out from the prophet's house without money, without introductions or friends, alone, to earn her own bread, whether by his command—sent out, as it was his wont to send forth those members of his community who were capable of earning money, to labour on its behalf—or whether by her own impulse, I cannot tell. It was her wont to attribute this strange step entirely to her own will; but, as has been seen, it was one of the understood duties of members of the community to take upon themselves the entire responsibility of any step which offended public opinion. She had gone to a place called Vallejo, where she was living in a poor lodging and taking such pupils as could be got there—the children of miners and other uneducated persons—in the humblest form of educational effort possible, though what she did teach was chiefly what might be called accomplishments,—music, drawing, &c. She used to say afterwards, when talking, as she did freely, about the experiences of this period, that the confidence of the humblest parents in their own future and fortune—the rudest among them entertaining no doubt that their children would occupy so much better a position than themselves as to make these accomplishments suitable and necessary—was amazing; and that the cost of such lessons was paid ungrudgingly by fathers and mothers who were themselves without the merest rudiments of education. Her reason for the step thus taken she always stated, as Lady Oliphant did the reason for their domestic work—to be her desire not only to share the experiences of other women who work for their living, but to prove to the faint-hearted that work could be found and a living earned without the forfeiture either of self-respect or cheerfulness. In short, that she had gone out, in the purest quixotism, divesting herself of all advantages save those inalienable and belonging to her very being (a most large exception), in order that other women, driven by necessity to the same course, should know that the thing could be done. This was her own explanation always to the world of the mystery of her proceedings. In a world so strange as theirs, it is possible enough that any fantastic reason might suffice for any act of self-devotion, especially if it was the will of the master that such and such things should be done. It is possible also that, though late, this was the ordeal through which every member of the community had to pass to prove their utter sincerity. At all events, it was no breaking away from the rule and obedience of Harris, but done in full allegiance and dependence upon his will.

The friends to whom Laurence appealed to stand by his wife in her solitary and laborious career immediately responded to the call; and Mrs Walker went at once to Vallejo, where she found Alice cheerfully installed, doing everything for herself—such a thing as a maid being, of course, out of the question for a poor teacher among the poor inhabitants of the Californian village. That she was already surrounded by humble friends and warm affection it is almost needless to say, for these sprang up like flowers wherever her foot fell. Far the most touching among the many letters of condolence and sympathy addressed to Laurence after her death came from humble women in this place, with little grammar but loving hearts, to whom her recollection was as that of an angel who had passed among them, leaving life itself more noble and beautiful ever after. The visitor from San Rafael passed a night at Vallejo in this humble lodging, shared the meals cooked by Alice's own hands after her teaching was over, and, it is unnecessary to add, gave her heart at once to the enchantress. Henceforward the exile had a home open to her, full of all luxuries, and especially those of affection and tenderness; and was beguiled to San Rafael for her holidays, and watched over when her delicate strength was breaking down. It was proposed that she should remove thither permanently, so as to be near her friends, and also to have a chance of pupils of a more congenial type; and Mrs Walker remembers looking at various houses in her own neighbourhood with the intention of finding one that would do for a school—a more ambitious undertaking. While considering this plan, Alice went to the house of Mrs Lynch at Benicia, who had a school of a similar character to the one projected, in order to receive information on the subject, and details and advice as to its management. But once again that power of fascination, which she had confessed with so much simplicity to be one of the hindrances to her religious career, came into operation, and the new friends who had kindly undertaken to give her advice as to setting up a school of her own, ended by imploring her, at the end of a very short visit, to stay and work with them. She accepted this offer, and remained there accordingly in a less isolated position during the rest of her stay in California.

But I think her heart was most in the humble solitude of her first outset, alone and independent, in the world. She too loved the sensation of adventure, the launch into the unknown, the primitive manners and thoughts of the uninstructed people among whom she found herself. She loved to speak of them, their curious sparks of refinement amid the rough, their faith in themselves and the future, and the perceptions of higher things that were strongly visible among them. I recollect her saying — a curious and striking piece of observation (I do not know if it has been confirmed by any other intelligent observer) —that a Californian audience enjoyed an opera, that highly sophisticated and recondite work of art, with a sensitive excitement and perception more like those of a Parisian audience than anything she had seen. She remained in the school at Benicia, teaching and shedding sweet influences round her, till she returned to England. And it was on the occasion of one of her visits to Mrs Walker at San Rafael that she painted a portrait of herself—a very real and affecting likeness of her expressive and charming countenance—which was an inexpressible pleasure to her husband in later days, and is the much-prized possession of the friends who added so much brightness to this period of her life, and who cherish and love her memory.

Whether it was that so strong a step as the complete severance of a married pair in this way was found at length to try the faith of the community in general, and to require an equally strong explanation, I am not able to say; but at all events it would seem to have been an idea propounded at this time that the marriage, which the community had at first so strenuously opposed, to which it had reluctantly assented, and which it had done everything in its power to nullify by continual humiliation of the "refinement and intellectual charm" of Alice, and a continuous succession of distant undertakings to Laurence—was not a true marriage of "counterparts" at all, and therefore could have no reality or sacredness. Perhaps this had been the first cause of her departure from Brocton, underlying all the other motives. It was, I think, in the autumn of 1880, when he was for some time in London, where I too was living, and had thus more opportunities of seeing him than usual, that Laurence confided to myself this extraordinary discovery. I remember with great distinctness the humble drawing-room in Victoria Square, that curious little haven of quiet in the midst of the noise of town, where on a wintry afternoon my delightful visitor communicated the strange fact, not only that his wife was not his counterpart, but that it had been discovered that he had a counterpart "on the other side"—that is, already passed into the unseen state—of whose communications he had been for some time increasingly conscious, and who had inspired him with certain revelations in verse which he asked leave to read to me. To see him produce these rhymed effusions, and read them with the strangest boyish pleasure and shyness, astonished at their cleverness, and pausing from time to time to assure me that of himself he could not produce a rhyme to save his life, was the most astonishing experience. If the reader should exclaim, as many have done, that this was sheer madness, I can only reply that a more sane person never existed, and that the verses in question, strange and bald as they were, and most unlike anything sent from heaven, were nevertheless as lucid as they were daring, and conveyed a trenchant attack upon social evils of all kinds, in something more like doggerel than poetry, but with much method and meaning, though little beauty. It is a difficult thing at any time for an unwilling critic to sit in judgment upon the productions of an author, read by himself; and the wonder with which one could not but contemplate this brilliant writer, a master of vigorous English in his own style and person, smiling and blushing over the inspired rigmarole of verse which it was his boast was not his, but something far finer than he could ever have produced by himself, was wellnigh stupefying. I must not avoid the confession of this strange lapse into foolishness which the extraordinary strain of faculty and possibility at this exceedingly trying period of his life betrayed him into. It is the only sign of mental aberration which I ever saw in him, the sole evidence I have ever been able to make out of that touch of questionable sanity which is supposed by many people to explain the secrets of his life. These things are very bewildering; but his absolute good faith was unquestionable, and it is almost needless to say that a mind more capable of discriminating sense from nonsense was not to be found in England. He was no critic, however, as has been seen in the earlier records of his life, and had accepted as divine poetry 'The Great Republic' and other productions of Mr Harris, so that his admiration of his own rhymes and wonder at them was less remarkable.

This, however, is an anticipation. In the meantime Laurence had still some vague years to go through of which there is little record. He roamed about America, and made one or two expeditions across the Atlantic, and was always full of occupation. His sole literary performances, however, were "Irene," published in 1877, of which he tells some amusing anecdotes, and "The Autobiography of a Joint-Stock Company," already referred to. I can scarcely tell whether it was to this latter production he refers when he says, "'Irene' made such a row in New York, and they are so sensitive, that I hardly like to publish it, if I am to mix much in the society there, as it will make it too hot." 'Irene' was the cause, however, of another amusing incident.

"*Dec.* 10, 1878.

"When 'Irene' came out and made a sensation in New York, the authorship puzzled people so much that a man claimed to be the author, and proceeded to write a continuation as such. Now that the authorship is known, he is in a fix, as his continuation is coming out. The claims of J. H. appeared in the American papers this spring [1878], and were indignantly contradicted by Hurlbert in the 'World,' who knew the real authorship. He was replied to by J. H., who insisted, and Hurlbert threatened to prove the fraud to Carleton & Co., who are his publishers, and who, knowing the circumstances, continue to be so."

It will be remembered that a similar incident occurred in respect to the 'Scenes of Clerical Life' of George Eliot, and that the impostor in that case stood his ground for some time with extraordinary impudence. It is in the letter on this subject, above quoted, and which was written from the familiar ground of the Athenæum, that the first intimation is given, suddenly and without preface, of a new and remarkable project which influenced more or less all the after-portion of Oliphant's life, and which seems at first to have been taken up as a speculation, with some curious contagion from the atmosphere in which he had been living. He states it first upon this ground, with a somewhat cynical reference to the higher religio-romantic motives, which would give it popularity, he imagined, and secure its pecuniary success.

"My Eastern project is as follows: To obtain a concession from the Turkish Government in the northern and more fertile half of Palestine, which the recent survey of the Palestine Exploration Fund proves to be capable of immense development. Any amount of money can be raised upon it, owing to the belief which people have that they would be fulfilling prophecy and bringing on the end of the world. I don't know why they are so anxious for this latter event, but it makes the commercial speculation easy, as it is a combination of the financial and sentimental elements which will, I think, ensure success. And it will be a good political move for the Government, as it will enable them to carry out reforms in Asiatic Turkey, provide money for the Porte, and by uniting the French in it, and possibly the Italians, be a powerful religious move against the Russians, who are trying to obtain a hold of the country by their pilgrims. It would also secure the Government a large religious support in this country, as even the Radicals would waive their political in favour of their religious crotchets. I also anticipate a very good subscription in America. I shall probably start about the end of the year for Egypt, as I want to look into the working of the mixed jurisdiction, and then go to Cyprus, Syria, Palestine, and Constantinople. I suppose I shall find plenty to write about, but I do not want it all talked of, though I find it difficult to keep it quiet. Both Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury are very favourable to my scheme."

"I am in close correspondence with Conder,"[1] he adds in another letter, "and have had a talk with him in London. He takes a lively interest in the scheme. He wrote some papers in the 'Jewish Chronicle,' and though there is nothing brilliant in his style, it is simple and straightforward, and conveys a great deal of interesting information about a country which always excites much interest, and of which he is better qualified to speak than almost any one."

The wonderful new project thus begun bears in its first disclosure a whimsical and ludicrous likeness to Laurence's own account of the Joint-Stock Company. He was himself the Promoter, setting out to procure his concession; feeling all the great possibilities in his scheme, which almost went to his head in the first conception; putting the profit to be secured in the foreground, as if that was what tempted him most, though, as a matter of fact, no single shilling ever came into his pocket from the scheme, which, on the contrary, involved him in many and considerable expenses; feeling also the innumerable other good things that would come out of it,—the restoration to the uses of humanity of a desert land which was overflowing with fertility and possible wealth, if there were but hands to till and plough; the opening to a persecuted race of a refuge from their oppressions and troubles; the help to civilisation and human progress, to good government and justice and peace, that were in it. All these kinds of profit were involved, and made him eloquent. They are repeated over and over again in the continually revised and corrected copies of his prospectus, his petition to the Sultan, his explanations of the same, and a crowd of documents all bearing on this question. He did not pretend that any desire to fulfil prophecy was at the bottom of the scheme, and had not, so far as I am aware, any enthusiasm for the Jews. I cannot indeed trace the first suggestion of the project, or anything of its development until it suddenly leaps forth upon us full blown. But he was at this period, as it is happily described in familiar slang, "at a loose end." He had, I imagine, retired from his previous mercantile ventures in no great mood for entering upon others of a similar description. He was greatly shaken and nonplussed in his private life, separated from his wife not only by the arbitrary division of distance and different work to do, but by the insinuated belief I have referred to, that they had never been true spouses, nor partners intended by heaven for each other; and moved, I can scarcely doubt, by the first difficulties in his absolute faith, the "little rift within the lute," which had hitherto given forth nothing but the harmony of perfect assent. Disgusted with ordinary business, shaken in the allegiance which for years had been the rule of his life, plunged into strange possibilities of spiritual union with an unknown partner, and the ache of severance from her whom he had loved and chosen, there was perhaps no part of his life in which his mind was less sure and at peace. The scheme about the Jews gave him at once the liveliest personal interest, the pleasure of a sort of amateur diplomatic negotiation involving the largest issues, and the mixture of adventure and use, which was at all times the thing he liked best in life. He was thoroughly convinced of the large human advantage of his scheme. I am inclined to believe, moreover, that he had really more interest than he gave himself credit for even in the religious view of the question.

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[1] Capt. Conder, R.E., one of the latest explorers of the Holy Land.

He left London for the East early in the spring of the year 1879, and went direct to Beyrout, from which place he set out on an adventurous journey into the unexplored wilds, traversing, with a single companion and two or three attendants, countries much less known and more dangerous than those which ordinary travellers then ventured upon under charge of a military escort, and with an elaborate retinue of camp and camp-followers. The account of this journey will be found in full in the volume published next year (and first in fragments in 'Blackwood's Magazine'), called 'The Land of Gilead,'—an exceedingly interesting account of much that was perfectly novel to the English mind. The result of his investigations was the choice of a district east of Jordan, at the upper end of the Dead Sea, partly lying in the deep valley of the sacred river, far below the level of the ocean—the most fertile part of Palestine, and just under those wonderful blue hills of Moab, which close the horizon with a line of heights more splendid in colour than perhaps any range of mountains in the world. I need not attempt to follow independently the route which Laurence himself has so admirably described. The sudden plunge into travel and adventure, after long cessation and employment among things of more immediate interest than Arab sheikhs and Bedouin encampments, has a curious effect upon the reader, so sudden is it, and unlike the circumstances through which we have just followed him. The great object of the expedition was to discover and select the most suitable ground for the proposed colony, and that was found without difficulty. I may add, however, the description of this wonderful district.

"Perhaps the difference in the luxuriance of the vegetation between Eastern and Western Palestine is brought into the most striking contrast on the Dead Sea itself. Nothing can be more barren or uninviting than the rugged waterless mountains on its western shore, while the wadies opposite teem with an almost tropical vegetation. Here are palms in profusion, and jungles of terebinths, wild almond and fig trees, poplars, willows, hawthorn, and oleanders covering the steep hillsides and fringing the streams of such picturesque ravines as those in which are situated the fountains of Callirrhoe and the wells of Moses. In the spring especially, these glens, adorned with a rich semi-tropical flora, are in their full beauty. There can be little doubt that the celebrated healing qualities of the hot springs of Callirrhoe, and the romantic scenery by which they are surrounded, would render them a popular resort for tourists and health-seekers, if ever this country should be reclaimed, and proper accommodation for travellers and visitors was provided. Included within the territory which I should propose for colonisation would be the Ghor Seisaban, or plains of Shittim, which Canon Tristram describes as 'by far the most extensive and luxuriant of any of the fertile lands bordering on the Dead Sea.' 'This abundantly watered and tree-covered district,' he continues, 'extends six miles from east to west, and ten or twelve from north to south. I crossed it myself at its northern extremity, and rode through an extensive tract of young wheat-fields, cultivated by the Adwan.' . . .

"Ascending from the fervid subtropical valley of the Jordan, we gradually, before reaching the plains of Moab and highlands of Gilead, pass through another zone of vegetation, until we finally attain an elevation of about 4000 feet above the level of the sea, and more than 5000 feet above the Ghor Seisaban; but the difference in feet does not really convey an adequate notion of the difference in climate, owing to the peculiar conditions of the Jordan valley, which, being depressed below the level of the sea, produces a contrast in vegetation with the mountains of Gilead corresponding rather to a difference of 10,000 feet than of only half that elevation. The consequence is, that in no part of the world could so great a variety of agricultural produce be obtained compressed within so limited a space. The valley of the Jordan would act as an enormous hothouse for the new colony. Here might be cultivated palms, cotton, indigo, sugar, rice, sorghum, besides bananas, pine-apples, yams, sweet potatoes, and other field and garden produce. Rising a little higher, the country is adapted to tobacco, maize, castor-oil, millet, flax, sesamum, melons, gourds, cumin, coriander, anise, ochra, brinjals, pomegranates, oranges, figs,—and so up to the plains, where wheat, barley, beans and lentils of various sorts, with olives and vines, would form the staple products. Gilead especially is essentially a country of wine and oil; it is also admirably adapted to silk-culture; while among its forests, carob or locust-bean, pistachio, jujube, almond, balsam, kali, and other profitable trees grow wild in great profusion. All the fruits of Southern Europe, such as apricots, peaches, and plums, here grow to perfection; apples, pears, quinces, thrive well on the more extreme elevation, upon which the fruits and vegetables of England might be cultivated,—while the quick-growing Eucalyptus could be planted with advantage on the fertile but treeless plains. Not only does the extraordinary variety of soil and climate thus compressed into a small area offer exceptional advantages from an agricultural point of view, but the inclusion of the Dead Sea within its limits would furnish a vast source of wealth, by the *exploitation* of its chemical and mineral deposits. The supply of chlorate of potassium, 200,000 tons of which are annually consumed in England, is practically inexhaustible; while petroleum, bitumen, and other lignites can be procured in great quantities upon its shores. There can be little doubt, in fact, that the Dead Sea is a mine of unexplored wealth, which only needs the application of capital and enterprise to make it a most lucrative property."

Whether the Promoter meant to line the shores of the Dead Sea with tall chimneys of chemical works, is a question which will probably make the reader shudder; but the picture he thus gives of untold wealth for the gathering, enhanced by the presence of a peaceful and docile population to act as labourers—for the Jew colonists were rather, it appears, expected to be farmers and overseers than absolute agricultural workmen—was enough to make the mouths of many capitalists water, to say nothing of other motives. When he had thus made sure of his sphere of labour, and reckoned up all its advantages, Laurence returned to Constantinople as a suitor at the Court of the Sultan, to procure the concession which was the first step,—at least he supposed it to be the first step. I have since heard it said by persons well qualified to form an opinion, that had he first secured possession of it by private arrangement, and sought his concession afterwards, he would have been more likely to be successful; but that was not among the methods that commended themselves to his mind. And he was strongly of opinion that nothing could be of more advantage to Turkey than the "development of a single province, however small, under conditions which should increase the revenue of the empire, add to its population and resources, secure protection of life and property, and enlist the sympathy of Europe without in any way affecting the sovereign rights of the Sultan."

At the same time, he had the anxious assent of the Jewish community to his design. From among the Jews in Roumania, and other persecuted districts in which he intended to find his colonists, there was an immediate response. A society was even formed among these suffering people to buy land for themselves, and make their own way in the Land of Promise. "Every one of the members is experienced in the work of cultivating the soil, and it is our intention to journey to Palestine to till the ground and to guard it," they said. Thus armed with all necessary preliminaries—his place chosen, his colonists secured, and furnished in his own person, if not with official warrants, yet with strong letters of recommendation from the Foreign Office—Laurence set about the work of diplomacy. It was the last step, and did not seem at all the most important; and when he first presented himself before the Ministers of the Sultan, it was with every hope of speedy success. The following letter, though without date, must have been written soon after his arrival in Constantinople. He sends to Mr Blackwood a description of several of the articles which were afterwards to form part of 'The Land of Gilead,' and which were chiefly occupied by—

"My explorations to the east of the Jordan, where I have visited parts very little known, and which will give some account of a province for which, I think, there is an immediate and most interesting future in store — that is, if I succeed in what I am about. So far everything has turned out beyond my most sanguine expectations; but I am at this moment at a standstill, not in consequence of any opposition which I have met with on the part of the Government, but because of the dire chaos and confusion which for the last fortnight has reigned in the Cabinet, and which has culminated in the Egyptian question. That, I hope, is now over; but the tenure of the Grand Vizier is so insecure that all arrangements made with him may at any moment be wiped out by his fall. I am afraid the empire is doomed: it is only a question of time. This last war has given it such a severe shock that it cannot right itself. It is like a ship on its beam-ends, and the rats are beginning to find it out, while traitors are boring holes in the bottom. Still, if I can carry my scheme before it goes, its future success does not depend upon the present state of things lasting here.

"I do not think of bringing 'The Land of Gilead' out in the Magazine, as I want it to come out at a particular moment to chime in with events; but the three articles which I now propose sending might be added to it, as they treat more or less of the same country. I am delightfully established on the shores of the Bosphorus, and am likely to be detained here for some time."

The next letter is dated from Therapia, the "delightful establishment on the shores of the Bosphorus" above referred to—an ideal spot more than half-way up that glorious strait on the way to the Black Sea, in shelter of one of the many lovely curves that form the European shore, and which are lined with shining palaces, villages, minarets, and towers all the way from Constantinople. Europe and Asia there smile or frown on each other from the vast ruins of the old crusading castles at one point, in the summer-houses of countless princes and potentates on the other, with the wonderful flood of sea-water, pouring salt and strong, between—from the dark seas that lead to mysterious Russian ports, to those which dazzle the beholder all the way southward to the Ægean, sweeping on through the Sea of Marmora and the Gates of the Dardanelles. At Therapia it is not pashas and effendis, but ambassadors from all the Courts in Europe, that line the shore with their delightful houses, and fill the little bay with their boats, from yachts trim and taut to the little caique that bobs upon the dancing waves. Laurence had spent the summer in this beautiful retreat, in the midst of the finest society—*attachés* and secretaries of legation flitting round their former brother in the craft, and careful ambassadors not scorning to take counsel with the sage, yet visionary, the man of the world who had been everywhere and seen most things under the sun, yet whose heart was all in some inconceivable mystery of religion, at which these gentlemen did not know whether to laugh or to frown. They did both; and it did not matter to him what they did, who was equally ready to laugh with them, or to fight for the faith that was in him. His very mission for the sake of the Jews—his curious design, which sounded at the first hearing as if it had some reference to the millennium and grand return of Israel and reign of the saints—would enhance the interest in him, as he sat looking out, over the wreaths of roses and overflowing verdure, upon the hurrying tides of the great strait and the stately vessels that went to and fro—writing once more the while the story of the country flowing with milk and honey, yet arrested in the very wealth of its powers till its ancient people should go back to till and plough. It would have added much to the picturesque effectiveness of the scene had Laurence believed a little more in the fate and fortunes of those for whom he worked; but if he did not regard them in the light of enthusiasm, which makes their future as interesting as their past to many, there was yet growing in him a sort of dedication to the service of the race of Israel which was not unimpressive. In the next letter which I shall quote there is still question of the book, which was, he hoped, to be of service too to the great scheme. This was in September 1879.

"I am now hard at work on my book, which I hope will take, as it deals with a part of the world in which so many are interested. I think I told you I propose to call it 'The Land of Gilead.' If I had only one or two more books of reference here, this would be a perfect place to write in—it is so quiet. Hamley is to leave to-day. I am sorry I have not seen so much of him as I should have wished. He lives at Buyukderé, about two miles off; and as he is a walker and I a lawn-tennis player, we could not take our exercise together so much as we otherwise should.

"I shall probably be kept here till the end of the year, and, if I succeed, shall bring out the book at the same moment that I lay my Palestine scheme before the public: the two things will help each other. I have not yet encountered a particle of opposition to it,—quite the contrary. Every Turk, from the Sultan downwards, approves most highly; but their *vis* *inertiæ* is so great, and their habits so dilatory, that it requires the greatest patience. I am glad that you are improving in health; if I succeed, I shall invite you to pay me a visit in the Land of Gilead: it is a lovely climate, and I am sure you would be interested in all there is to see."

It is strange and sad to find this invitation, so lightly given, in the last letter ever addressed to the correspondent of so many years. Mr John Blackwood, the editor of the well-known Magazine and head of the well-known firm, died shortly after its receipt, to the great loss of all who were connected with him — the loss of a friend, adviser, and steady backer-up, if such a word is permissible, in all literary matters, which Laurence, in common with many others, felt deeply. His next letter is addressed to Mr William Blackwood, who had taken his uncle's place in the conduct of affairs — not, happily, a new correspondent or unknown friend to the hereditary supporters and clients of his house. It was accompanied by an article for the Magazine.

"CONSTANTINOPLE, *November* 17 [1879].

"It occurred to me that, under the tremendous pressure that is now being put upon Turkey, the Turkish view by an intelligent Turk might not be amiss. It is not flattering to Christians, but they never really hear the other side of the question. I have thrown into the form of a letter from a Turk opinions which I have heard the most enlightened Turks express. Of course my Effendi is a mythical personage, but his views are those entertained by the most enlightened and independent-minded Turks—men who will have nothing to do with politics, and live in retirement, and who have educated themselves by foreign travel. There are not many such, but there are one or two; and although a good deal of hostile commentary may be excited by the paper, you are not responsible for the opinions it contains.

"I hope Mrs Blackwood is bearing up under her great loss. You must all feel the blank terribly, and you especially, with your increased responsibilities. I hope you have good assistants to lighten your work."

The next letter of the series is again occupied with the two subjects—'The Land of Gilead' and the great colonisation scheme.

"Constantinople, *April* 9, 1880.

"The introduction is necessarily dry. The subject is one not susceptible of light treatment, nor do I think that the religious public, for whom it has a special interest, will find fault with it on that ground. It gets still worse when we come to the archæological part. But if I succeed in my scheme, I have no doubt it will have a great sale: the success will in a great measure depend on that. I have been kept here from day to day by messages from the Sultan, begging me not to leave until he has had an opportunity of talking with me, and I have another matter on hand which will certainly keep me here for another fortnight. . . . What an extraordinary surprise these elections have been! The Turks are in consternation at the idea of Gladstone Prime Minister, and indeed the situation here is getting so interesting in consequence, that I am not sorry at being kept a little longer." "Gladstone," he adds, a few days later, "is a sort of Moody of politics, and his powers of canting revivalism are unsurpassed. . . . The amount of intrigue I am now encountering at the palace seems likely to beat me: it all seems to hinge on an interview with the Sultan, which Layard does not seem to have influence enough to obtain against the forces brought against him."

Here was virtually the end of this great scheme:

the hopes, which at first were so lively, died down by degrees, and finally the project was given up altogether. But though it did not itself succeed, the suggestion was a most fruitful seed, and fell into good soil. Since then a number of Jewish colonies have been settled in Palestine, not indeed in the chosen spot which Laurence selected with such care, and for which he foresaw so splendid a future, but in other parts; and, I believe, with varying success. It is difficult for a stranger passing through these distant regions, without command of language or natural opportunities of intercourse with the inhabitants, to come at anything that can be depended upon as the truth—which has different aspects, according to the eyes that look upon it and the point of view they take. Thus those who dislike the Jews—and they are many—tell a tale of indolence and exaction, and relate how the colonists demand everything from their founders and nothing from their own exertions; while those on the other side take a much more favourable view of the strangers brought into their hereditary country. Perhaps, as generally happens, there is truth in both reports. I confess, however, that the sight of the new cottages, and still more of the half-cleared fields, built round with what we call in Scotland dry-stone dykes, made of the stones painfully gathered off the encumbered soil, with the young corn in its emerald green pushing round the still remaining boulders, was to myself a very affecting sight. Not without labour could the long quiescent soil be cleared of that encumbrance, which makes one feel as if not alone a martyr here and there but the whole land had been stoned, for the misdeeds which heaven has been so long waiting to forgive. I speak with the sentiment which Laurence Oliphant always disavowed—a great sympathy and reverence in the thought that the most strange of wandering peoples (I do not say the most lovable or attractive) may yet be led back, some nucleus and seed of them, to the country that has never yet been restored to its fertility by any other hands.

After this failure, which no doubt was a great disappointment to him, Laurence returned to England, and during the greater part of the year, I think, remained here. It was in the early winter that I saw him, as I have already described, and heard those confusing suggestions about the Counterpart in heaven, and the curious string of satirical verses which this very mundane angel, too well acquainted with the devices of society, had, as he thought, communicated to him. The verses were never printed, so far as I know, and it was well that this was the case, for I do not think they would have done the unseen collaboratrice any credit. I believe that his little fictitious liveliness of satisfaction in these apparently quickened relations with the unknown was in reality the mere endeavour of a sanguine and courageous spirit to indemnify itself for the clouds and weariness in which life was being lost. It was a dismal long way from London to the wilds of California, where, separated from him by more than distance,—by the irksome sway of a false obedience, and the sophistry of a spiritual guide whose despotism was becoming insupportable,—his Alice was; and his great scheme had failed; and perhaps the interest which he had hitherto excited on all hands began to fail a little too, or to be mingled with other sentiments, as he lingered about with no longer any scheme in hand, too much perhaps like other men; and people began to ask where was his wife, and why was she banished so far away, while he was, as the vulgar thought, enjoying himself here? The vulgar mind exists in all degrees of social life, and it was perhaps not unnatural that lookers-on of this complexion should take it for granted that the husband was enjoying himself because he was in England, and his wife injured and suffering because she was in California, occupied, as their fashionable friends whispered with bated breath, in the most menial offices, while he dined with princes. California, however, is not so far from England after all as to be altogether deaf to what occurs on the other side of the Atlantic; and when the derogatory rumours and wonderments of society — wonder so easily converted into scandal—at length reached the ear of Mrs Laurence Oliphant, her good sense at once convinced her that a summary answer must be given to the gossip, and the position at once rectified. The Prophet would also appear to have been convinced of the necessity of taking from all adversaries such an occasion to blaspheme, for he does not seem to have interfered to prevent her journey in any way. Accordingly it became known suddenly in the early winter of 1880 that at last she was to join her husband in London. There was but one voice of jubilee and congratulation among all who knew them, at this much-desired reunion: and after her long absence, and wonderful experiences, Alice Oliphant was received everywhere with something like an ovation, subdued by the impossibility of saying what had been in everybody's mind, yet expressed in many a fervent pressure of the hand and outcry of satisfaction.

It was in a little lodging in Half-Moon Street, just before Christmas, that I saw her for the first time. The fascinating and vivacious beauty of her youth could only, I think, have been enhanced, in expression at least, by all the strange vicissitudes she had gone through. She was by this time at the full height of life, the *mezzo del cammin*, and a little worn with delicate health and many labours; but so sweet, so bright, so gay in her profound seriousness, so tender in her complete independence, that all the charms of paradox were added to those of nature. She had the gift (which is an inheritance and special endowment of some well-bred Englishwomen) of a certain soft eloquence and command of perfect words which was delighful to listen to — like music, but better than music to ears uninstructed in that art. Her husband was a brilliant conversationalist, but she was something more. Her beautiful sentences flowed like the easiest of chatter; her sweet speech, in which the most keen critic could not have found an inappropriate or misplaced word, seemed simple as the utterances of a child. She had caught in America, with her fine musician's ear, a slight accent, which was amusing and piquant in an Englishwoman, though perhaps in itself scarcely delightful to English ears; and the extraordinary mixture in her of the finest culture of the Old World and the freedom and strange experiences of the New—the latter acquired, not in sophisticated places where New York or Boston holds the mirror up to London and Paris, but in the Far West, and in the primitive country districts, where all is individual and strange—was more fascinating, amusing, and curious than words can say. She was in all her beliefs and sentiments a mystic of the mystics, by force of nature as well as in devotion to the mysterious faith which had held them both in such complete and long subjection; and to which, in spite of all that had come and gone, she was still bound heart and soul. She would talk, in her beautiful way, freely of what that faith and these principles were; but I am bound to admit for myself that, though the talk was delightful, and to listen to the voice of the charmer, so long as she pleased to discourse, a constant fascination, yet I was little more enlightened at the end than at the beginning. But this was at a later period, and hurries the narrative, which here must receive her own explanation of the causes of her long absence, which the reader may think makes the guesses I have offered already unnecessary, or even vain, and which I find in a letter to her mother, Mrs Wynne Finch, dated from the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, on her arrival, and which is full of the excitement and buoyant pleasure of the return.

"1*st November* 1880.

"So many thanks for your loving little note, which was delightful to read on the wharf, as a first greeting, after Laurence's, in old England. I am a little more than usually tired with the almost unbroken journey of twenty days, having had an exceedingly rough passage, with much suffering, and having, moreover, taken a cold, which became bronchitis just as I was beginning my preparation for it, in California, so that I have had a weakness and cough working against me ever since.

"It appears that there is a ball at Sandringham on the 12th, and Hamon is naturally anxious that I should be there; which I could do as well as not by taking care of myself up to that time.

"So far as the *on dits* go, I assure you that my presence in this part of the world will soon relieve you of all the difficulties which you have, I know, contended with so bravely. Is it not funny what simple things cause so much astonishment? I tell every one whom I meet the plainest truth about myself and my peculiarities, and in case you have any occasion or any wish to state the circumstances to any one before I meet you, in the same way as I do, I will here reiterate them; otherwise I am in the Old World to answer for myself, and can give all detail of explanation that any one may require when I see my friends. I have always exacted of Laurence that he should leave me free to make my own personal experiments that I may think needful for my usefulness in the world, as also of all my American friends. During this recent period of our separation I have to my own satisfaction, and entirely unknown to Mr Harris (whom I have not, because of his health, been able to see for three years, and who did not know till the other day what I was doing), solved the question to myself of being a producer in the social scheme, unaided by any social connections, besides many other questions related to it, and of great practical value to myself. I return here for a while because I want to see you and my friends, because Laurence needs help that I can render him, and because I need rest—*et tout est dit!* except the thousand things that you will want to ask, and that I shall be delighted to answer.

"It seems unmitigatedly happy to be amongst you."

Thus the simple story was told. It was very simple and true, and explained nothing, which is the best kind of social self-interpretation. Thus from teaching her little music-class in the Californian wilds, among the humble women who afterwards mourned her as an angel departed from among them; she flashed at once to the home of royalty at Sandringham, where all the Norfolk gentry, much occupied in their minds as to what had become of her, and whose fault it might be, could see at once that there she was, both happy and independent—a wife truly united to her husband, a lady just as fit to stand before kings as when she had disappeared from among them. It was in its way a little triumph which, true woman as she was in all things, she enjoyed.

But she came home to find her husband ill, and she was herself still combating the cold caught in California, and greatly worn and exhausted with all she had gone through, and the stormy voyage at the end; and the pair were very speedily sent off by that habit of English doctors which sometimes affords a much-desired outlet to the sad and anxious, and sometimes is so great a burden and vexation. To the Oliphants it was a very convenient and delightful way of escape from various embarrassments; and they set out for Egypt together with great enjoyment of that fact, and a return in the mind of Laurence of that healthful and cheerful impulse "to write something," which happily was now in full force again. The record of their journey is to be found chiefly in the 'Land of Khemi,' which relates the happy wanderings of the reunited pair among all kinds of unknown places entirely out of the beaten track, the fertile district of the Fayoum, and many others where foot of Englishman had scarcely passed, and which travellers less happily provided than themselves with official protection and help could scarcely have undertaken, unless at enormous expense and risk. I am obliged to add, however, that this journey, which seems so happy in the narrative, was vexed by many irritating restrictions on the freedom of their intercourse, which had been imposed upon them as the condition of their prophet's permission for the return of Alice. And another demand was here made on his part which I believe was whimsically and involuntarily balked by their residence in Egypt at the time of receiving the command. The call which was made upon them, as upon the other holders of land in the Brocton community, was that they should formally make over their rights in that property to their head. Neither of them, I am told, had the slightest intention of rebellion or resistance. But the Consul-General in Cairo, before whom it would have been necessary to appear to execute the documents required, was an acquaintance of both, and they shrank from the inevitable betrayal of their act, and social discussion of it that would ensue. This accident, as I am told, saved as much as could be saved of the property of Laurence: that of his wife had long been out of her own power.

The Egyptian book was published very soon after their return to England. The following letter, addressed to Mr W. Blackwood on the way home, shows how far the work had advanced, which must have been chiefly written amid the perpetual movements of the journey, between December 1880 and March 1881:—

"CAIRO, *April* 19.

"I shall probably leave for America about the 15th of May; but my wife will remain in England, and she is so well up in the names, &c., that she will correct the proofs of the remaining parts. I do not expect my absence to be long; but as I shall probably have to go to California, I may not be back before the end of the year. I am fortunately well enough to travel, but have not got quite sound." A month later he writes from London: "I have taken a cottage for my wife at Windsor, not far from her namesake, so perhaps you will make a trip there and polish off both the Mrs O.'s. They are great friends."

It was indeed an unusual gratification to have such a neighbour as Mrs Laurence Oliphant close at hand, and her delightful company was a pleasure all the greater from her extreme unlikeness to anything likely to be found on the homely level of a little country town. She had seen so much, and of all sorts and conditions of men—her experiences were so wide-spreading, from Belgravia and the Faubourg St Germain to the Californian miners and farmers of Brocton; and she would change in a moment from discussion of the highest problems to discourse upon the habits of the cocks and hens which she took pleasure in feeding and watching; or would rise from the table where she was making with flying needle a cotton gown for the summer, to play from memory a movement from Beethoven or Mozart, all with equal interest and energy and playful earnestness. There was no weariness where such an inmate and companion was. To old and young she was alike delightful—not too wise for the girls, not too serious for the boys; ready to talk, to laugh, to play on the piano almost anything they asked her for; to fall into beautiful discourse one moment upon the love and service of mankind, to which she felt herself dedicated, and to break off the next into some homely jest of the family in which, like the jokes at Farmer Flamborough's, there might be little wit but much laughter.

I have said that her explanations of the faith she held were bewildering to me. The dual principle carried out in the relations of humanity, but springing from the very Godhead — which was made up of a Father and Mother, the masculine and the feminine in one person—was the heart and soul of this system. I am not able myself to see that this view gives any deeper or more attaching charm of tenderness to the all-embracing love of the Father in heaven: but many good people have felt that it did so; and to many, I believe, the doctrine of the new and close union between the Counterparts of married life, so that the man could be said to dwell in the woman and the woman in the man, each coming forth for their special department of human concerns, and retiring when it was their partner's turn, has been as a revelation from heaven. The additional sacredness thus given to what is already the closest tie on earth, and the conclusion that the deepest interests of the human race were involved in it, and could only be worked out by its universal acceptance, was the chief dogma, if dogma it could be called, of the new faith. It differed only in its intenser feeling from the well-worn doctrine that "they two shall be one flesh," or at least it professed to be the perfect carrying out of that familiar principle, which, like almost all the principles of religion, Laurence Oliphant and his wife considered to have fallen into mere dead words and not living sources of faith. And yet I think I have known many pairs walking by a very sober light, who were indeed and in truth one flesh, or rather one soul. This, however, in the opinion of my friends, was what the world had lost; and to regain the belief in its most superlative carrying out, in that state where each should be the complement, conscious and certain, of the other, and in which the mutual thoughts or breathing together (Sympneumata) of the two were to purify the world and bring in at last the fullest conditions of salvation—not indeed that salvation which the older creeds called saving of the soul, in their idea a purely selfish formula, but the redemption of the race from all its sins, the extinction of evil, the regeneration of the world—was the subject of all their desires and thoughts.

The reader may ask what had been in the meantime the history of the forsaken mother, who, during all these vicissitudes, had been labouring on alone at Brocton, far from the children she loved, in a position which the spectator can scarcely but feel to be cruel, but which she had chosen and accepted with the fullest faith. When Laurence left England in May 1881, it was for the purpose, among other things, of visiting his mother and satisfying himself as to her health, of which disquieting rumours had been heard—not, I believe, from herself, for there had been little if any correspondence permitted between them for years. He had so great a faith in the continuance of her bodily vigour and health, which he believed to be sustained by constant communications of heavenly strength from her Counterpart on "the other side," his father, that he was not, I think, very anxious, but yet felt it necessary to see for himself how things were going. He found her, on his arrival at Brocton, much worse than he had thought, suffering from cancer, completely broken down in strength, and also troubled in heart and faith. I do not know how it had come to her in her long and weary drudgery to begin to doubt the truth of the Master, for so many years a veiled and distant prophet, whose sway had for so long been absolute over her life. Certain rumours about his life in California had reached his distant kingdom at Brocton, and awakened troubles and sorrow there; and this dreadful disenchantment was working in Lady Oliphant's mind as well as the deadly malady in her blood.

Laurence in alarm summoned the best medical aid for his mother, but found little comfort in the opinions of the doctors; and, whether by their advice or with lingering hopes of supernatural restoration, took her away a long and weary journey to California, with the intention of going to a watering-place there, where there were certain springs supposed to be of advantage in her complaint. They went first, however, to Santa Rosa, where in all likelihood he at least had still some lingering hope that the "Father," to whom so much of his life had been devoted, the leader and guide of so many years, would find means of doing something for the faithful servant who had obeyed and believed in him for so long. I know no details of this visit, except that the sad pilgrims—the dying mother and anxious son — were far from graciously received. Their tyrant, who had so sensitive a consciousness of the "states" of his disciples, no doubt felt that something had come into their feelings towards himself which was new and strange, and either did not think it worth his while to conciliate them, or considered it still in his power to terrify and overbear. I do not know if any open breach occurred at this time; but such a small incident as the sight of a valuable ring belonging to Lady Oliphant, which had been given over with all other treasured things into the keeping of the prophet, upon the finger of a member of his household, brought a keen gleam of conviction, both to the one who doubted already and the other who did not know whether to doubt or, as on former occasions, to gulp down every indignity and obey. They remained only a few nights after their long journey, and were dismissed with, I believe, the scantiest pretence of hospitality upon the further way.

The invalid however never reached the waters in whose healing influence her anxious companion had some hopes. They got as far as a village called Cloverdale (the reader familiar with that country will pardon my ignorance of the localities), where there was a woman who possessed one of those panaceas which are to be found in every country, decoctions of herbs and faith, curing actually in some few cases, by what action on body or mind it is hard to tell, various ailments and diseases. When he found that his mother could go no further, Laurence wrote to his friend in need, Mrs Walker, telling her his circumstances. That kindest of friends at once went to their aid. She found Lady Oliphant very ill, but quite incredulous, as was Laurence, of the possibility of approaching death — and attended by the woman with her cure, which, however, was administered without confidence, the rural healer doubting that the patient had strength to recover. That any cure should have been sought at all was entirely contrary to the orders and will of Harris, and angry letters had been received from him denouncing it. On what proved to be the last night of Lady Oliphant's life, Mrs Walker watched with Laurence in the sick-room : and she has described to me an extraordinary agitation of which she was sensible, in the air, which she could compare to nothing but a storm or battle going on over the bed, which affected even herself, no believer in the mysteries which were so dear to them—with all the sensation of a terrible conflict, during which the patient suffered greatly. And then there came peace and great quiet, and the sufferer looked up, restored to ease, and told her son that she had seen his father, who had poured new strength into her, so that she felt overflowing with vitality, and knew that now she should live and not die.

With these words on her lips, and murmuring something about the angels all around and about, Lady Oliphant died.

She had been greatly deceived in her life, and suffered much. Yet we may be well assured that in the chief point of all, in the divine footsteps she had tried to follow, and the God whom she had always sought, though through mediums of human weakness, she was not deceived. It seems to the spectator a hard fate that this tender mother, so devoted through all his life to her only child, should have been left so long in her failing days, at the end of life, alone in a far distant country, separated from all who belonged to her. But at all events it was with her son's hand in hers, and her Lowry's beloved face bending over her, nearer to her than any angel, that this good woman, much blown about by many winds of doctrine, yet always steadfast to the standard of divine charity, passed into the eternal home, the way to which was never far off from her humble feet.

His mother's deliverance from the bonds of the flesh was a great shock to Laurence, not only in his tenderest affections, but in those hopes which he had entertained that one so supported by the unseen need not die. When they had laid her in her grave, so far away, he returned with Mrs Walker to her home at San Rafael, a sorrowful man shaken loose for the first time from the strong delusions which had held him for so long. He had still believed, though perhaps with doubts and fears, when he took his dying mother to Santa Rosa; but their reception there, and many circumstances connected with it, the unexpected repulse, the evidence of things which he could not but see, though hearing of them he had not believed, ripened these doubts into conviction. The revelations which she had made to him affected him still more powerfully after she was gone; and when, in the silence of his sorrow, other recollections arose in his heart—recollections of the bitterness he had endured in that same place when turned away from the doors within which his wife was, denied even a word with her—and of the manner in which his life had been foiled and turned aside, his energies checked, his labours interrupted, and everything he had and was turned to the profit of another, his heart burned and his bonds were broken. Ill and sorrowful and disenchanted, suffering from that most tremendous of moral convulsions, the throwing off of a long and confirmed allegiance, the destruction of a faith that had been for many years the chief thing in his life, he passed through a period of suffering and mental conflict which had no parallel in his previous life. He had thrown over the world and all its hopes, his career, his ambitions, and his pleasures, lightly at the command of what he felt to be a voice from heaven; but when he had to give up his faith in that voice and tear himself asunder from the influence which had cruelly interfered with every detail of his existence, the effort was not light or easily made. Mr Walker tells me that, as he discussed the question over and over again with his friends, great beads of perspiration would come out on Laurence's forehead. The struggle was one almost of life or death.

Fortunately, however, he was now in the midst of wise and energetic friends—friends who, as his friends everywhere would have been, were glad to perceive that the bonds which had been becoming more and more impossible through all these latter years were broken, and to help him towards a full emancipation. In this respect there was a long and difficult struggle to be gone through, which Laurence would have been totally incapable of conducting for himself, but which Mr Walker, a man of great standing and importance in the district, was fully able to carry out, and did carry out, with, I have no doubt, no small enjoyment in the task. It is not necessary that I should enter into the processes by which the land originally bought by Laurence at Brocton, but which the head of the community had always administered and virtually possessed, was dragged back into the hands of its true owner. The operation took a considerable time, and much pressure; but as neither the Californian merchant nor his lawyers were afraid, and their antagonist had by this time a great deal to lose, and could not afford to risk all that might arise from exposure and publicity, it was finally successful. The active agents found the greatest satisfaction and pleasure in extracting, bit by bit, the fields of Brocton from the hands which had held them so long; but the man for whose benefit and in whose name the struggle was carried on did not enjoy it: he was torn asunder by the very fact of his escape. And I am told that a member of the Brocton community who was summoned to give an account of the property, a strong and sturdy young farmer, trembled like a leaf in presence of the Sorcerer who had thus bent them to his will, his knees knocking under him, and perspiration pouring from his brows. Many, if not all, of the Brocton people shared the doubts which Lady Oliphant had conceived, and were at the same time delivered from their long subjection; but I do not know if any were so successful as Laurence, by means of his friends, proved to be, in the redemption of their land.

There remained, however, a horrible question which took away all the comfort from these successes. What would Alice say in England, whose faith was unbroken, who had not laid a finger to the pulling down of the idol, and to whom it might seem the wildest iconoclasm and blasphemy? This question was not solved, nor was there any confidence as to what its solution would be, when Laurence at length set sail for home. To escape the wintry journey he took a roundabout route, which he has described, I think, in one of his articles, going to New Orleans, and from thence along the Florida coast to Havana and St Thomas, and so to England. He writes from Havana to Mrs Walker, in a letter which throws some light upon the terrible suspense from which he was suffering:—

"I ought to be in good spirits so far as my physical condition is concerned; but I cannot help feeling anxious at leaving the enemy so much time to carry on machinations in England possibly during my absence. In spite of my resolution to forget all the suffering I have passed through, it keeps coming back like a nightmare, and it will be some time before my wounds are healed. . . . I daresay you will have heard from my wife long before this, and therefore will know more than I do what she is feeling. It seems so long to be without news from anywhere."

Alice meanwhile had not been without her share of suffering. I cannot tell whether, perhaps, had not the wisdom of him whom Laurence now describes as the Enemy failed him, it might have been possible that her strong faith in him might have vanquished her love for her husband. But fortunately the wisdom of the serpent sometimes does fail. One day while the struggle was going on she received a telegram from Santa Rosa, demanding the aid of her authority in order to place her husband in a madhouse, proceedings to which end had been begun, but could not be completed without the sanction of his nearest relative. It may be imagined what effect such a message—so fiery, sudden, and imperative—would have upon a woman trembling between two of the strongest impulses of humanity. Reluctantly, forced by an order so inhuman, so treacherous and terrible, the scales fell from her eyes also; and when Laurence, still trembling for the issue, reached Plymouth in the end of January 1882, he had the happiness to find his wife waiting for him there, in blessed demonstration of her fidelity and support in this perhaps most terrible moment of his life. He sends a hurried intimation of that fact off at once—and of their pause for a week or two "in a seaside villa lent us by the Mount Temples," at Babbacombe Cliffe near Torquay—to his friends, with an intensity of relief which may well be imagined.

This strange story of their emancipation from a long tyranny which is more strange still—and strangest of all how it could have endured and affected the whole current of their lives—gives a singularly dramatic conclusion to the wonderful tale. It is strictly and painfully true; but that does not detract from the strange completeness of the construction, for truth, as the most hackneyed of all proverbs says, is always stranger than fiction. Fiction indeed can rarely at any time venture upon combinations and catastrophes which are the daily experience of life.

They remained in London for some time after this, where Laurence occupied himself in preparing for publication the entertaining volume called 'Traits and Travesties,' which consisted chiefly of articles contributed to 'Blackwood's Magazine,' almost all of a high order of merit, and perhaps more welcome to the public than the volumes of travel which one could not but feel might have been done nearly as well by a less gifted hand; whereas nobody but Laurence could have written the stirring adventures of the War Correspondent, the pungent remarks of Turkish Effendi and American Senator, still less the experiences of Irene Macgillicuddy, or the still more astonishing narrative of Dollie, all of which are included in that book.

This was the end of anything that could be called residence in England for the much-travelling pair. Mrs Laurence Oliphant never returned after her brief stay; and he came only for flying visits, sad enough and forlorn. Another, and the last, phase of their united life, in every respect the happiest, but of short duration, was now to begin.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SUNSHINE OF THE EAST.

It is scarcely necessary for me to enter into the history of the persecution and ill-treatment of the Jews in the provinces of Galicia, Wallachia, &c., which made so many unhappy families homeless, and roused the indignation and sympathy not only of their own people scattered over the world, but of most Christian nations, during the year 1881. It will be well enough remembered that one of those great subscriptions, which show at once the wealth and liberality of the City, and which have done both good and evil under the title of the Mansion House Fund, had been taken in hand for the distressed and persecuted Israelites during the course of the year, and that a large sum of money had been raised which it was of great importance to find trustworthy agents to administer. His previous exertions in respect to Palestine colonisation had called the attention of the heads of the Jewish nation in England, as one who had done a great deal of work in their interest, to Laurence Oliphant, who was, as it happened, at this moment without any serious claim upon his time and thoughts. I have no information as to the preliminaries of his appointment, having only heard suddenly one wintry Saturday evening that they were going off on Monday to the unknown world, and that if I wanted to say good-bye to them, I must go at once. On a Sunday afternoon, accordingly, wet and cold, in one of those London lodgings which look so dreary out of the season, a large dingy drawing-room in Clarges Street, I think, with heavy old furniture adding to the gloom of the London afternoon in its general absence of light, I saw Mrs Laurence for the last time. She was seated by the fire arranging her ornaments in a little jewel-box in preparation for departure, her graceful head relieved against the dull glow of the fire on one side, and the duller light of the afternoon falling upon the slimness of her shadowy figure, the dark hair loosely brushed back from her fine brow, the delicate profile bending over the trinkets, on the other. She was cheerful and pleased with the expedition, the new worlds to conquer and strange sights to see; and presently her husband came in, who told me the story of his mother's death as I have already recorded it, with the invincible cheerfulness natural to a man who looked upon death rather as a means of bringing those he loved nearer to him than of making a dreadful void in his life. They were all packed and ready for their start, not knowing precisely where Providence might lead them before they came back, but facing all the hazards of the future with pleasant confidence — a confidence, no doubt, springing partly from an ever sanguine and buoyant nature, but chiefly from the sense of the great work which they felt to be in their hands, and which they were sure of the guidance of God to enable them to carry out.

It was during this interview that I became aware distinctly, and for the first time, that the guidance of Harris was no longer the rule of their lives. No explanations were entered into, unless it were a brief and unwilling intimation that the point of view on which the disagreement took place was a pecuniary one, and caused by the action of evil counsellors round him. I had remarked a caution in the manner of Alice in referring to him during the latter part of her stay in Windsor, which had prepared me to hear of some change in their relations. And I confess to having felt much sympathy, and even sorrow, for the disenchantment, feeling that it could not but be a great mental shock to be forced to admit that the man who had dominated their lives for so many years was not the prophet, guide, and leader they had believed him to be. The force of indignation with which his later acts had inspired them, however, and the sense of newly regained freedom, and consciousness that no one now could interfere with their union, neutralised the severe blow of discovering his unworthiness. And they were now as people emancipated, safe and secure in being together, and evidently feeling themselves fully equal to the task of guiding and helping those who should adhere to them. Free as they had always been from the usual ties of a settled home, they were now more free than ever; but with the difference, that their first aim hereafter was to find an abiding place and centre for themselves, and that "work" which was to them the chief end of life, independent of all previous associations. What was really meant by that work was at all times a more difficult matter, and apt to exercise the minds of those who followed them with ever-increasing interest and wonder, but limited understanding.

This, then, was their new beginning and independent set out in life. No idea of separation crossed their minds any more; they were more happy in each other's society than perhaps they had ever been: even in the first enthusiasm of their marriage there had always been that chain, sometimes lightly borne, sometimes almost imperceptible, but at any moment capable of being tightened by the impulse of an abrupt recall. They set out now hand in hand, with the happiness of a boy and girl going forth upon a new world, which was all before them where to choose, or at least contained somewhere a heaven-ordained sphere, where in direct communion with all they loved, and guidance from on high, they could work and live.

The preliminary chapter of this new existence carried them, indeed, into a region of winter and rough weather, both physically and spiritually, to begin with, in the midst of the suffering crowds of Jews. Laurence wrote to Major Goldsmid, who had at one time intended to accompany him—from Paris, the first stage of the long journey, regretting the impossibility of their meeting, but expressing a hope that "we shall yet be associated in a far more interesting and lasting work than the emigration of the Jews from Brody to Canada."

"*9th March* [1882].

"I forwarded to Lord Mount Temple a very important letter yesterday from Galatz. There is an immense movement going on in Roumania, and subscriptions amongst Jews alone there for Palestine colonisation purposes, it is hoped, will amount to fifty thousand francs a-month. I shall visit the local and central committees in Roumania, and report thereupon."

The next letter is from Jassy, Moldavia, and seems to point to a resignation of the immediate Mansion House commission, and return to the always interesting general subject of Jewish colonisation in Palestine. Laurence, however, retained the command of money from charitable sources with which to relieve the poor Jews who crowded about him wherever he went.

"*5th May* 1882.

"I have been so overwhelmed with work and correspondence that it has been quite impossible for me to reply to your letter sooner. I was detained at Lemberg for three weeks through the bungling chiefly of the Mansion House Committee, whose intentions are better than their executive faculty, and, after all, was prevented from accomplishing in that time what would have been a simple operation. However, Montagu and Asher came out at last, and I was able to hand on the responsibility of making arrangements, which are not in the least likely to succeed, to them. They all mean well, and are doing their best. Meantime I am thankful to be independent. On the 3d I attended a meeting of delegates from twenty-eight Palestine colonisation committees. There are forty-nine in the country altogether. It was very interesting and encouraging. My correspondence from all parts of Russia tells me that the movement is universal; but for the moment everything is at a standstill, until I have been to Constantinople to find out the dispositions of the Turkish Government. I hope to arrive in Constantinople next week, and it is impossible to say exactly how long I shall be kept there. Probably I shall go from thence to Beyrout, as I shall also have matters to arrange at Damascus; and it would not be well for you to come out before September or October, which is the pleasantest season, and when something definite will have been settled, and matters regularly *en train*. You would have been immensely interested had you been with me. The poor people are so grateful, that my wife and I are the subjects of a series of ovations. She has just managed to scramble through on the health question, and has had several times to spend a day in bed, sometimes knocked down by the amount of suffering she was called upon to witness, sometimes by the fatigue unavoidable in these long railway journeys. However, I hope the worst is over. I have not had time to write a line to any paper. We leave this to-morrow for Bucharest."

Things, however, looked very black when he proceeded to Constantinople, where, instead of progress, there seemed to be nothing but retrogression since his futile attempt to gain a concession in the previous years. Then it was the vacillation of officials he had blamed; now the motive of delay was more marked, and the hostility declared. The following was written for the information of an American newspaper:—

"It may interest you to know that the Sultan refuses to permit the Russian and Roumanian Jews, who were desirous to emigrate to Palestine in large numbers, to form colonies in that country. Two or three delegations which have already been sent to the Holy Land have selected land, and although the money has been collected and the families are ready to settle, they are unable to do so, as the Turkish consuls at Odessa and Bucharest refuse them the necessary passports. Jewish delegates from various societies are now in Constantinople endeavouring to overcome this difficulty. Meantime two hundred families have arrived there, and are unable to proceed, and their means are rapidly becoming exhausted. Indeed some of them are at the point of starvation, and unless measures are promptly taken, will have no means whatever of subsistence. I have sent letters to be circulated amongst the Russian and Roumanian Jewish communities, impressing upon the numerous colonisation societies the necessity of waiting until existing obstacles shall have been removed. Meanwhile the political difficulties which have arisen in the East, in consequence of the recent action of England and France in regard to Egypt, tend to complicate the situation, and will probably render the Sultan more reluctant than ever to introduce a new element into the Eastern question by opening his Asiatic dominions, and more especially that portion of them with which so strong a religious sentiment is connected, to the immigration of Jews *en masse.* Meanwhile, as the hostility of the Russian peasantry, fostered by the Government, towards the Israelites continues to manifest itself in renewed persecution, the condition of that unhappy people, who find this avenue of escape unexpectedly blocked to them, is truly deplorable.

"The position there, however, is too strained to last. I cannot but think that we are on the eve of an important political crisis, but at this moment I am powerless. The very name of an Englishman is enough to rouse the Sultan's present opposition, and the influence of the British Ambassador is entirely negative—in other words, it would ruin any cause he attempted to advocate. But this is not the present man's fault, but that of the policy he has inherited, and which is imposed upon him from England."

I may also quote here another letter explanatory of the situation in which the scheme of Jewish colonisation stood a month later, which Laurence addressed soon after his arrival in Constantinople to Mrs Wynne Finch, enclosing a communication more formal than a personal letter.

"Constantinople, 20*th June* 1882.

"I have always left correspondence with you to Alice, as I have been so overwhelmed that I have had to go to the extravagance of keeping a secretary, who speaks eleven languages and writes in five, which has resulted in a perfectly ruinous bill for postage every week; but I am thankful this phase is drawing to a close. A certain Mr Cazalet has, as it were, run across the scent, and drawn the Semitic pack after him, thus giving me some relief; so I am for the present going gracefully to retire from the prominent position into which I have been forced in spite of myself, and wait till the development of events forces me to resume it again. Alice has therefore wished me to explain my situation and that of the question generally to you, and I cannot do this better than by copying a letter I am on the point of sending to the most prominent Jews in Russia, which will be published throughout the Semitic press of Russia, and probably of Europe generally.

"'The question of Jewish emigration to Syria has become surrounded, as you are aware, by unexpected difficulties, owing to the important political European questions arising out of the European imbroglio, and to the prohibition issued by the Porte against colonisation in Palestine. There is, however, an old emigration law, of which I enclose copy, under which the Turkish Government undertakes to provide all immigrants desirous of becoming Turkish subjects, and possessing a certain limited capital, with suitable tracts for settlement. At the request of Mr Cazalet, an English gentleman, whom I have not the pleasure of knowing except by correspondence, the Turkish Government has under this law indicated, as the region suitable for the Jews, certain tracts in the vilayet of Adana, on the Orontes and in Mesopotamia. So far their assurances upon this subject are merely verbal; but they have also been made to the American Minister, and I have every reason to believe that they will soon be specified in writing, so that I think they may be relied upon. Should you feel warranted in acting upon these facts, I would suggest that you form your central organisation and send delegates to examine the land without delay, and that if on their return to Constantinople they report favourably upon the conditions under which colonisation is to be undertaken, a permanent commission should be established at Constantinople, which should place itself in communication with the Turkish Government, and arrange the details in regard to the settlement of the first colonies; and that delegates should at the same time be sent to England to solicit the pecuniary aid in that country which I am sure would be forthcoming. The lands will accommodate hundreds of thousands of families, who, according to the explanation given by the Government to the American Minister, will be planted in villages of from two hundred to three hundred houses each. It is possible that even special regulations may be promulgated shortly by the Turkish Government on the subject, but in the meantime this is how the matter stands. I regret that I am obliged shortly to leave Constantinople, but the American Minister, whose Government takes a benevolent interest in the subject, has kindly assured me that he will be happy to render your delegates or local committee any assistance in his power.

"'Although it is not possible at the present moment of public agitation to obtain such special facilities and advantages as would in my opinion ensure the success of colonisation in masses, I believe that a more favourable juncture of circumstances will ere long arise. In the meantime, I trust that your co-religionists will not allow themselves to be discouraged by this check, and they may rest assured that I shall continue to feel a warm sympathy in their sufferings and their future welfare.'

"The above," he adds, "will appear in the 'Jewish Chronicle,' but in the meantime it may interest Lady W. to see it.

"The next [July] 'Blackwood' contains a squib by me, entitled 'The Great African Mystery,' on the Egyptian question. It may perhaps seem rather a grim joke now, but it was printed and despatched to England before we had heard here of the massacres in Alexandria. I thought you might like to know of it.

"*P.S.*—Cazalet has a capital of two millions."

The colonies which were begun on this guarantee, and their success, are too large a subject to be discussed here. The history of the pair of travellers, whose fortunes are our immediate concern, goes on through all these extraneous matters. Before the above exposition of the existing state of affairs was written, Laurence and his wife were settled on the edge of the Bosphorus, at Therapia, in the midst of the summer society of that interesting place.

"This is a lovely spot," Mrs Laurence writes to her sister, "as indeed almost every place along the shores of the Bosphorus seems to be; and we have chosen rooms in a house that is a little way up the abrupt slope. Our ground-floor is at the height of two or three tall houses above the shore, and we are at the top of it, which enables us to look up and down the Straits from our windows."

"Among the various reports," she adds, in another letter to her mother, "of the prospects of the Jews, you must have been puzzled to know which was likely to indicate the state of affairs. Practically none; for while there is generally some foundation for all the ideas of the correspondents, who catch hold of scraps of information about the various intrigues eternally fastening here upon every public event—how far any intrigue will go it is impossible to predict; still more, how far any frank demand for the redress of grievances will succeed is uncertain till long after it is made, because, as you know, the Government here encourages and smiles amiably on intrigues and open questions alike, and promises for ever but gives nothing, if they can help it, in writing. It has taken most of the time we have spent here for Laurence to get to the bottom of the motives of some half-dozen sets of individuals professedly working for the relief of Jewish persecution by Asiatic colonisation, some of whose schemes seem plausible enough, and combine a good backing of money with sincerity of aim. But, after all, they all turn out to be more of money speculations than anything else, and he finds he cannot work with them on that ground. Among the various ways in which he has found means of approaching the Cabinet without risking a flat refusal of even a hearing, one only has produced a result that may lead to obtaining a definite permission for the colonists for the north of Syria, and that is through the American Minister and Government. But they still delay the written permission, without which the most certain probabilities are perfectly useless. So, though there does seem some chance of soon knowing *où nous en sommes*, still practically, as every uncertainty here is all uncertainty, we live on in suspense still. No assertion of permission obtained that you see in the papers means anything: they all refer to verbal promises, not documents, alas!"

"It is full swing of summer," she continues, July 5, "of society and conference now, and this part of the Bosphorus is as busy as a large town; but the climate is perfect enough to reconcile one to almost anything, even to the torture of Tantalus, which it is to let the ambassadors sit under one's very nose and be unable to know what they do. In spite of their mysteriousness, we see enough of Lord Dufferin, M. de Noailles, and M. Corti (their three summer embassies being at Therapia) to judge that they are almost distracted with the agonies of the 'cleft stick' in which they find themselves. Every other subject than that of the situation has dropped out of thought here. Laurence has been sending no advice to Jews the world over but to wait, for any attempt at a movement would only bring them into disaster. He thinks upheaval throughout this empire more imminent than most people do. He says there can be no question now of our moving ourselves to Syria till the questions pending between the Governments are defined one way or another; so we are making no plans, but stay on here, where we are well, and well off, for the present, indefinitely. You will see a very tough article of his, if you have time to read it, in the next number of the 'Nineteenth Century,' 'The Jew and the Eastern Question,' which sums up his view of the whole prospect.

"We dined last night with the de Noailles. She is always full of questions about you, and is particularly affectionate and attentive to me. Laurence likes him, and all the diplomatists consider him very pleasant. Count Corti, whom H. and E. will remember at Washington, is a very old friend of Laurence's, and he has completed my comfort here by giving me a key to the door at the top of the embassy garden, which is just opposite this house, so that I have his hanging terraces to myself, and a short cut down upon the line of houses where most people live at the water's edge, and to which the scramble down the little street is stony and roundabout. The gardens of the French and English embassies, also climbing the slopes above their palaces, are indescribable for beauty. Periodical garden receptions have begun at both, where all the diplomatic world take tea, and tennis and talk; and one can come and go freely enough not to find it a fatigue to 'see the world.'

" We thought only (August 10) of moving about thirty miles off, and it will not change our address if we do. We have delayed on account of the uncertain appearance of political affairs ; but they seem settling into a sort of a groove, so now it depends on our finding a house on Princes Island. If not, we shall stay here another two months. Lady Dufferin has arranged for my bathing with them (in an enclosure with a false bottom, the deep water frightening weak swimmers otherwise), and will send the children's donkey for me, and send me back every day ; so I am not absolutely dependent on a change of place for my bathing now. . . . We were greatly amused at another piece of Lady S.'s temper. She is certainly preposterously rude. But Laurence says she would speak just the same before his face, and says she doesn't half mean it ! I wish we *had* the benefits our interest in distressed populations is supposed to bring us. With a little more money we could do so much more good. As it happens, though our travelling expenses to Lemberg were given by the Mansion House, incidental matters of charity to them have made us some hundreds of pounds out of pocket this spring ; besides that, we had sent between forty and fifty souls of them to Brocton, where all the first year's expenses will have to be borne by our property before their labour can begin to make them independent. Poor things, we get such grateful letters from there. We gave orders to have their Sabbaths and all food and other special observances respected, of course. This experiment interests Laurence particularly, because the great fault and weakness of the Jews is their inability for handy work; and he says to train even a few into that, and into a co-operative manner of life, will be a great gain. As soon as they begin to earn their own livelihood, they will be taught how to share the profits of the land, so as to have the dignity of part proprietorship. Meanwhile Laurence keeps us bravely with his pen; so we are not exactly in the reckless enjoyment of moneys obtained for 'Harrisonian' purposes that Lady S. seems to suppose, though very comfortable and happy, and interested in all we do. But it is quite futile to explain, and your quiet fencing is the only and best way to deal with the class of people that can never get the right end of the stick in their hands."

This allusion is to one of the many stories which were always rife as to the proceedings of two people so little apt to be "understanded" of the common spectator as these: it being so much more easy, it appears, to conceive the idea of a high-minded gentleman living and growing fat upon money collected for the service of the poor, than of his adding from his own stores to their relief, and serving them "all for love and nothing for reward." I have myself heard from the same quarter as that which produced this report the most ludicrous as well as slanderous version of the original life of Brocton, which I love little, being, as it was, under the shadow of an unjustifiable and cruel domination, but which was only too self-denying and pure. The body of Jews sent to Brocton, I believe forty or fifty in number, had a fluctuating fate, now up, now down, and cost Laurence,—what was for him a large sum of money,—I am told, about four hundred pounds altogether; but whether the experiment was a permanently successful one, I have not been able to ascertain. The letter resumes:—

"We have no plans now but to watch, from not too far, the fate of Islam, which includes the province where sooner or later we want to make a home. But how long the question of any one's going, much less settling in Syria, will be a castle in Spain, it is impossible to tell. Probably Cyprus would be a good place to winter in, because Laurence can make an easier livelihood where news abounds, and as near the scene of disturbance as is perfectly safe for me. But he says Constantinople is very disagreeable in winter, as I see it must be in bad weather."

A few weeks later Mrs Oliphant writes from Prinkipo, one of "the Islands" to which at certain seasons all the higher class of residents at Constantinople resort, and which rise out of the soft waters of the Sea of Marmora, within sight of the Golden Horn and all its mingled masts and minarets,—another variety of beauty, yet scarcely less attractive than the lovely bays of the Bosphorus.

"Thank you for trying to see Mrs Cuthbert. She had gone to Broadlands. I am so happy in the possession of an intimate and understanding friend. Our little household often makes me laugh at its heterogeneity: our three selves (cosmopo-English), a little Polish Hebrew, and Hebrew scholar required for the Hebrew and German and Roumanian correspondence that Laurence has, and a steady old Greek man-cook, who takes charge of kitchen, marketing, and table, and does a little housemaiding—the first excellently, the rest indifferently; but with a little charwomaning, we accomplish housekeeping in delightful simplicity. We are all hard at work like a school of children. The Hebrew must learn English to fit on to some other work Laurence will want him for later on, so I give him a daily lesson through the German. Then Violet Cuthbert learns German, of which she had a smattering in her youth, so I have another pupil. She will want it when we flit to Syria, as it is the modern language of all Eastern Jews. Then Laurence takes lessons in the rudiments of Hebrew, besides writing, of course, more or less all the time; and what with the *crin-crin* of education and the ordinary correspondence, with sprinklings of needlework, sketching, donkey-riding, and bathing (this probably stopped by the rain, which has to-day, October 20, brought an autumnal change of temperature), we constitute a perfect ant-hill of small activities. It is only possible because of our complete absolution here from social duties, but it is very refreshing to mind and body."

This time of suspense, yet of partial holiday, lasted some months. They had no pressing cares: the absence of money, and the need of in many ways shifting for themselves, were to these two, trained by so many experiences both lofty and homely, *la moindre des choses;* and they were together, in the midst of the most beautiful scenery in the world, with as much diversion in the way of society as they cared for, and a great deal of their own company, which they liked best of all. But in the end of the year Laurence was so far satisfied with the progress made, or else with the impossibility of making progress, that they felt themselves free to proceed upon their own business, and seek the home and settlement upon which they had set their hearts in Syria. It was, I believe, more what we call chance than any deliberate choice that directed them towards Haifa (or Caiffa, as it is frequently called), a small bright Syrian town lying on the western edge of the Bay of Acre, with a beautiful prospect across that bay of the historic fortress, which has figured in so many wars, and the noble background behind of the hills of Galilee. The aspect of the place, lying in almost perpetual sunshine, with a fertile plain sweeping behind to the edge of the low and swelling slopes of Carmel, charmed the wanderers, who had no settled ideas on the subject or attraction to one place more than another. And when they landed and found that the little Eastern town, with its white rounded house-tops and mosque reflected in the shining water, had—the quaintest of contrasts—a comfortable European settlement behind, with a row of well-built houses arranged along a sort of rural street with shady trees and gardens, the additional attraction of this mixture of comfort and cleanliness, and the kindly faces of the German colonists ready to help and advise the strangers, decided them at once. It is curious to know that the original aim and inspiration of this German-American community was the same injunction to "live the life" as had given all that was good in it to the community at Brocton; with this addition in the case of the Germans, that their hope, as members of the Society of the Temple, was thus to await in the Holy Land the coming of the Lord.

It happened fortunately that a house remained unappropriated, next to that of the heads of the German community, the kind and friendly Schumachers, German-Americans of the most worthy type, their strong nationality scarcely tempered by the atmosphere of the Moslem world about, with which both the Oliphants were so familiar. Nothing, indeed, can be more quaint than the homely village Germanism, which shows so strongly amid the habits and languages of the East; and its addition of solid, honest, and practical dealing was an unexpected and delightful addition to the possibilities of life. They decided accordingly to settle here. It was on the highroad to all the projected settlements of the Jews, and close to some of these still undetermined colonies, as will be seen from the following letter addressed to Major Goldsmid, one of the most energetic and persevering of the Jewish organisers.

"HAIFA, 1*st December* 1882.

"I was very glad to think that there is a prospect of my having a visit from you here. I have just taken a house for a year in this charming spot, and my wife and I are busy furnishing and installing ourselves—not a very easy matter, with such limited resources as the country affords; so that if you come in March you will find us, and by that time the Jewish colonies will be in a more interesting condition than they are now. I have not written to the 'Jewish Chronicle' about them, as so far there is nothing favourable to report. The Roumanians are the most active. The Russians, having taken my advice, are waiting for a more propitious moment. The former are trying to colonise against the wish of the Government, trusting to backsheesh to overcome opposition. One colony, the land for which has been purchased about twenty miles from here for 40,000 francs, is still waiting for its settlers, not one of whom has yet been placed upon it; and the expenses so far, besides the purchase-money, have been over 20,000 francs, all which has been contributed by poor Roumanians. I am afraid there is a good deal of misappropriation of funds, but I am keeping clear of it, as they refuse to be advised. I have visited the property. Meanwhile there are about thirty families living in Haifa, waiting for Government permission to go on the land. I hear that the Shaftesbury colony at Latakia has not yet got upon the land. There is another colony near Safed, which I understand is doing better. The climate here at this time of year is simply heavenly."

Several other letters on this subject give a view of the gradual settlement of these Jewish colonies, and the very anxious care and supervision exercised over them. The question is one into which it is unnecessary to enter, and I have not sufficient information on the subject to be able to offer any account of this work. Its success—if it succeeds, which I believe in some instances it is doing—owes everything to Oliphant's initiative, though his original scheme failed, and he took no positive part in carrying his own suggestions out. There are various notes, however, in some of these letters to show the offices of mercy and kindness which he did execute personally towards the weaklings of the flocks :—

"I gave B. W., about whom you wrote, money enough to take him back to Roumania: he was a poor, weak, good creature, quite useless here. There is a man, H., who is poor and deserving, and whom I help on the sly, but I have got him taken on as a colonist at Rochepina. It is difficult to help the poor and deserving, as I do not want to interfere with Rothschild's arrangement; and as a general rule, it is very fair and just, but here and there are cases of hardship. There are two who are not agriculturists who are being dismissed from Summarni. They are offered their passages back to Roumania, but they don't want to go, and say they are willing to work here; so I am going to have them employed by the German colony on general works for the colony, and as they are not worth wages to the colonists, I will pay them. In this way I will test their sincerity as being willing to work as day-labourers, and have them learn agriculture."

In the meantime, both before leaving Constantinople and after his settlement at Haifa, Laurence was "supporting us bravely by his pen," as his brave wife, generously scornful of all the false reports of the ignorant and ill-natured, said. Article after article poured from that lively and rapid pen—from brilliant *aperçus* of the political situation to the amusing little drawing-room comedy of "Adolphus," a trifle dashed off in fun and haste; and he had nearly completed, while about those golden shores and islands, the novel of 'Altiora Peto,' of which he writes to his editor in 1882. Mr Blackwood had evidently bidden him "Let sleeping dogs lie," in accordance with the proverb, in respect to some of the satirical assaults contained in his new book.

"Something must have happened since the 'Turkish Effendi' and the 'Reconstruction of the Sheepfolds' to make you fear the 'sleeping dogs.' It is just the sleeping dogs that I am determined to poke up. They have no business to be asleep; but I can quite understand that you should not want to poke them up with the Magazine. The novel is in the 'Piccadilly' style, but ventilates theological opinions that are not old-fashioned, and goes in largely for attacking the views of modern society."

This book, accordingly, was not published in "the Magazine" (a fond and familiar arrogance of title adopted by all her contributors to distinguish the *doyenne* of all existing magazines, the ever fresh and living 'Maga'), but was brought out independently during the next year in numbers, as the works of George Eliot had been—an experiment only capable of being tried with a very well-known and popular writer. I believe it was altogether the most highly popular and successful of all Laurence Oliphant's works, and excited great interest both among those who enjoyed the satire and those who were moved by the more serious interest. The title of the work and the name of the heroine were taken from his family motto—"Altiora Peto" ("I seek for higher things"), being the distinctive sentiment, among various Oliphant mottoes, of the house of Condie. There was much appropriateness, and some humour, in the adaptation. I fear, however, that the blaze of wit and social satire which gave the tremendous sensation of the plot an air of intentional extravagance, were more thought of by the general reader than the superlative love and high philosophical mission of Altiora and her visionary lover. It was the first time that Laurence had mingled his English and American experiences of the world, and to many persons the conjunction added much to the piquancy of the work. Old Hannah, who is the most original of the characters, may probably bear an ideal resemblance to some of the mothers of the community at Brocton, in her mixture of the quaint rural American woman with the prophetess and seer. So might the woman have spoken who mourned over the sweet face of the bride to whom, the community were so much alarmed to hear, Laurence had pledged himself. "I see great suffering before her whichever way she turns, for with her feeling is life." One can scarcely doubt that he was thinking of some such personage when he placed this angular, tender-hearted, queer-spoken mystic, the illuminated person, yet village seamstress, upon his canvas.

And then there ensued a peaceful moment, an idyl of peace and tranquil life, coming late and lasting little, yet full of a harmony and chastened happiness which was to this pair, tried by long separation and struggles, like Paradise after Purgatory. They were free from the bond that had become intolerable to them. No one could part them more or dictate to them where to go, or how long to stay, or exact from them any senseless sacrifice. They were matured in their religious views, and gradually growing more and more ready to give forth the truth that was in them according to their own conception of it. Harris was swept away from their lives, yet he had been one of the stepping-stones to their present clear perception of what they thought the highest truth; and as it was their greatest happiness, so was it one of the deepest tenets of their belief, that only by their life together, and their united impulse, the "breathing together" of their work, could they produce to the world what they felt to be the best that was in them, and believed to be a new message of wonder and blessing. In the radiant clearness of the Eastern air, on the edge of the dazzling sea, with the homely kindly Germans round them, the wandering poor Jews, landing forlorn on their way to colonies only half organised, to succour and help, and a little floating circle of friends and disciples circling about them, —their life was very simple but very full. There was no formal attempt to form a community like that at Brocton; but their house was hospitable and ever open, and one of their dearest aims, or rather hopes, was, as Alice told me, to be able to offer a shelter from the winter to such of the "dear people at Brocton" as were delicate in health, or weary with their laborious life. I imagine that after the establishment of Harris in California, Laurence had become a sort of head of affairs at Brocton, by right probably of being the largest landowner among those remaining there; for the connection with this place was never broken, notwithstanding the complete severance from its founder. The accounts of the life at Haifa are modified according to the reporters, one visitor representing the *ménage* as consisting of a number of nobodies hanging on to and living upon the master and mistress of the house; while another laments that the disciples saw the truth only through the eyes of Laurence and Alice, in a spiritual dependence even more complete than the physical. But everything that I have heard of the strangely constituted household gives it an aspect of simple cheerfulness and pleasant routine, which is soothing and agreeable. It had the unusual aspect of a household solely held together and actuated by religious unison, yet without religious observances or united worship of any kind. The fact that the whole soul of the two to whom the house belonged was bent upon leavening the world with a knowledge of the love of God, and of working together with Him to purify and elevate it, and that their main object was to live a life like that of Christ in the world, is enough to show that in their omission of all those links of common doctrine which bind Christian communities together there was neither profanity nor neglect, but that in this, as in other things, they acted upon principle and conviction. What Laurence has said of prayer fully shows his own profound understanding of that closest communication of which we are capable with the Father of Spirits. I do not know upon what ground they rejected all public service,—probably from a sense of the temptation to make a mere show and fiction of religious feeling, a conventional necessity, if not a falsehood altogether, of every general form. But it was their idea also that work was a thing sacred, not as a mere means towards an end, but indeed an end in itself, one of the methods of the perfect life.

"A servant for this cause,
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room but by Thy laws
Makes that and th' action fine."

They divided among the different members of the family, having but limited help in the way of servants, the domestic and other duties, one having the charge of the house, another of the garden, another of the horses—very few in number the latter, for their establishment was not extensive in any way. And it was in thus serving each the other by daily offices of love and practical kindness—the "Use" of their original foundation—that they considered themselves most appropriately and continually to worship God. There will be many who will no doubt be inclined to say, with the highest of all authorities, This might they have done, yet not have left the other undone. But this is not the place for criticism of their beautiful and blameless lives.

Haifa was delightful during the winter, and full of simple pleasures as well as work. There was no society, it is true, but plenty of friendly people, all the more original that they knew nothing of society, nor of what we call conventional life—forgetting that every nation and class has its own immovable conventions, stricter often than any known in Mayfair. They had a natural ride laid out for them, far better than any Rotten Row—ten miles of fine and shining sands between their village and the little town of Acre: they had sea-bathing at their doors. They had visitors, now and then a passing cavalcade of travellers, something more than tourists, bringing a whiff of home and all its naughty ways. It would be curious to count the number of known persons above the common, led to make that detour out of sympathy and interest, if not friendship, who thus glided across their horizon, and brought back reports and descriptions of that strange and distant home. A row of white gleaming tents on a natural terrace, within a stone's-throw of the village street, so cheerful and comfortable, and unlike the domed and minareted town on the other hand, gave thus an occasional change and variety to the scene; and the wistful and ragged Jew, homeless and faltering upon the edge of a new life, for which nobody could yet tell how much or how little he was adapted, made the exercise of pity and succour to the destitute an almost daily necessity. The American visitor from Brocton, shrewd yet visionary, filled up the curious tale of company, along with the Roumanian Hebrew, and the quick-witted Syrian of the plain, and the Druses from Carmel, and the travellers from Belgravia. The two central figures in this curious jumble of nationalities and conditions were equally at home with every one of them, and delightful and friendly to all.

The Druses from Carmel make soon a very marked figure among their surroundings. Haifa, notwithstanding the sea-breezes, proved too hot for comfort in summer, and an expedition was made to the hills in quest of a refuge from the hot weather. The low range of Carmel lies behind Haifa to the westward—a long line of green slopes, folding over one another, but with no mountain-head towering over them to give them character and importance, as is the case with the range of Hermon. Carmel, indeed, is gloomy in its woods and dark greenness, from the narrow edge of plain that lies between it and the sea; and it is only on ascending the steep and rocky way that leads through a picturesque gorge brilliant with flowers, to the wide opening and fertile undulations of the summit, that the traveller realises its beauty and wealth. It is no steep and rugged mountain, as we are apt to suppose, but rather a district of rich land scarcely needing to be terraced, not more steep than many well-cultivated districts both in England and France, but raised upon the shoulders of these slopes, as if to separate this fertile and flowery land from the common level of the world below. The road from Haifa leads along the shore of the beautiful bay for four or five miles to the wonderful and gigantic ruins of Athlit, the stronghold from which the beaten Crusaders took their final departure from Palestine—ruins that in their utter desolation still look like the work of Titans, and which Laurence has admirably described in one of the short letters that compose the book called 'Haifa; or, Life in Modern Palestine.' The road from this point turns inland; and after crossing the level for a mile or so, begins the ascent, which is no longer practicable to anything on wheels. Truth to tell, the waggons of the German colonists, which are the only wheeled vehicles in this part of Palestine, are as little suggestive of comfort as any conveyance can possibly be, though they are a wonderful resource to that portion of the population, less numerous in Syria than among ourselves, which is not happy on horseback, or able to spend long days of slow progress in the saddle.

Nothing could be imagined more beautiful than the wild and formless track up the hillside through the tangled copse and flowery shrubs of the Carmel slopes. Not to speak of anemones and cyclamen, and a host of smaller flowers, the dazzling spears of the wild hollyhock, and of a kind of glorified willow herb, the great bushes of cistus, which some botanists take to be the rose of Sharon, the sheaves of iris, and a hundred more to which it is difficult to give a name, make the path a continual delight. But the delight is modified to the rider inexperienced in such paths, who has to prick his way up rocky steps, pushing through the flowery scrub, and unable to go beyond a foot-pace; and still more to the unfortunate traveller who has to be carried upon the shoulders of half-a-dozen wild Druses up the prolonged and difficult ascent. My own progress in this way (if I may make a momentary personal digression) was amusing, if a little nervous work. Starting dignified, but somewhat dreary, with two bearers who carried my chair at a low level, with straps attached to the shafts over their shoulders, the advance was very slow and the slim Druses easily exhausted. It was at length proposed by some one that the straps should be done away with, and the shafts themselves elevated to the shoulders of the bearers, thus admitting of four men to carry the unexpected weight. When this change was effected, the work became but too easy, the four men being continually replaced by another four, who thrust their volunteer shoulders under the shafts and ousted the previous carriers with what was evidently excellent sport to them, but a little alarming to me. Among them was one wild man from the Hauran, with coal-black hair and beard and a dark-coloured *kuffieyeh* (the picturesque kerchief with which they cover their heads, held on by a sort of fillet of thick black woollen cords), with cheeks slightly tinged with rouge or some corresponding colour, and eyes brightened by *kohl* — these enhancements of beauty being general among Druse men. The others were chosen from among the best men of the village, and all wore the red-and-white striped coat which is peculiar to the Druse. As we went along, one began to play upon the Arab pipe, the most lugubrious of instruments; and as we approached the village, where the stony track was replaced by the curves of a half-made road, several of the men burst forth into a chant in which the same words, unfortunately unintelligible to me, were repeated over and over again; and as the music was accompanied by much "daffing,' laughter, and talk among themselves, and the continual pantomimic feat of substituting one set of bearers for another, I have no doubt the appearance of the procession must have been somewhat bacchanalian. Descending on the other side of Carmel, after a most dreadful experience of precipitous and almost impossible paths, one of the shafts of the much-jolted chair at last—but fortunately not until we had reached the flowery plain of Esdraelon—broke, and pitched me from the shoulders of my astonished bearers on to the grassy though stony soil below. Happily there was no harm done; but the childlike dismay and penitence of my poor men, their humble and not very effectual, but most sincere and compunctious, attempts to be of use, were amusing enough. They had really nothing to be remorseful about, for their light-hearted fun had nothing to do with what a few hundred feet higher up might have been a serious catastrophe.

This is entirely a personal digression, but it shows something of the manner in which the Oliphants had to make their summer flittings to the top of the hill. In the chapter called "A Summer Camp on Carmel," Laurence has recounted his first exploration of these heights, where he found ruined towns and villages on every slope—architectural remains very different from the mud houses of the Druses, who are now the sole inhabitants. The description of the wonderful prospect from the summit I may quote from his narrative. It is taken from Esfia, their first camp.

"On the north-west, distant six miles, curves the Bay of Acre, with the town itself glistening white in the distance; and on the south-west, distant seven miles, the Mediterranean breaks upon the beach that bounds the plain of Sharon, and with a good glass I can make out the outline of the ruins of the old fort of Cæsarea. Southward are the confused hills known as the mountains of Samaria; beyond them, in the blue haze, I can indistinctly see the highlands of Gilead; while nearer still, Mount Gilboa, Mount Tabor, the Nazareth range, with a house or two of that town visible, and Mount Hermon rising behind the high ranges of northern Galilee, are all comprised in a prospect unrivalled in its panoramic extent, and in the interest attached to the localities upon which the eye rests in every direction."

The spot in which they finally settled was the village of Dalieh, where they built a little house very small and primitive at first, though various additions have been made since then. At a later period the discovery was made of a great vault excavated by some previous inhabitants hundreds of years before, close to the little house, in which, in the heart of the blazing summer, such visitors as had no fear of snakes and scorpions sometimes took refuge. But the house above, though so small, had yet some way of expanding to take in a guest or two, like the hearts of its inhabitants. And here, I repeat, between these two houses—Haifa in the winter, Dalieh in the summer—they spent the happiest portion of their lives. Sometimes they explored the endless groups of ruins about, from splendid Athlit, with its remains, which look like those of the palace and castle of a race of giants, to the caves of the shepherds and labourers, and little hill-villages of a previous yet not antiquated age,—for the houses of the East do not change in fashion. And Alice Oliphant, with all her intellectual powers, her beautiful *parole ornate*, and all her gifts, was as happy winning the hearts of the Druse women, teaching them where it proved practicable a little Western lore in the shape of domestic comforts, ministering to them in their sickness—as any queen—time-honoured parallel, but false enough; for what queen, with royal cares upon her head, could be so happy as this beautiful soul in her little kingdom, in the daily occupations of the "Use" which made household work a religious exercise, and with all those primitive untrained creatures about her, following her every movement with admiration, growing a little nearer to her by the link of love between them? It is enough to see their great lustrous eyes light up at the name of the Sidi Alice, to divine what her living presence among them must have been. Laurence, I believe, interfered with even more immediate efficacy in their affairs, taking upon himself the responsibility in respect to the exactions of the Turkish Government, which kept the village from ruin, and opened to him every sanctuary and every heart.

I may now turn to the little store of letters which throw the clearest light upon the first settlement at Haifa, but which in the first place seem almost to contradict what I have said as to the fact of their being no community in the usual sense of the word. They are from Mrs Oliphant, and addressed to her mother, Mrs Wynne Finch.

"*March* 18, 1883.

"You can have no idea what a busy struggle Mrs Cuthbert and I have been having. Just after Laurence left us, nearly four weeks ago, for Cairo, we found that of our Brocton friends three had not only accepted our invitation to come here, but were starting at once. I was delighted, but have since that moment had to be every hour at the back of masons, carpenters, joiners, and upholsterers, such as this simple colony of Germans provides, besides manœuvring the preparation of daily requirements, which requires trouble, as Guy will tell you, in an Eastern country. We now expect them by the Alexandria boat hourly, and have managed to make such preparations as enable us to pack old Mr Buckner and Mrs Fowler into the house, while J. F., son of the latter, will sleep at the hotel at first. To Mr Buckner, who was once a parson, but who has been for twenty-five years meekly serving his Maker, as he believes, in the preferable labours of farm and field, this pilgrimage is an unexpected realisation of a life-long dream; and it is touching to think of the long and painful journey, the first of his life, that he makes for it at nearly seventy years of age. Both he and Mrs Fowler, a most comfortable and responsible assistant to me in household matters, are heart and soul devoted to the effort we ourselves are making to establish a rational and humane manner of life on a basis wider than that of personal, national, or sectarian interests; and they are anxious to help us to test the advantages of this country over others for pursuing the experiment, seeing with us that it unites many elements of interest, health, and freedom that it is good and unusual to find combined. J. F. comes to see us rather as his mother's guest than as an actual associate, being of a charming active nature, delighted to attempt any kind of pioneering of a material character, but neither given to moral cares nor to speculations as to the hidden issues of the age. . . . Mr Buckner will relieve us of all our account-keeping anxieties at once, and will also take the responsibility of the farming of the little property that belongs to the house, off Laurence.

"It was so good of you to think of offering me pretty things, dear mamma. You could not possibly go wrong in bestowing anything of beauty, from a picture to a frying-pan, on me, if you did not miss it; for we have to be very careful just now to confine our outlay to barest necessities, and those of the roughest sort, so that every scrap which adds a little grace to our surroundings, or a little ease to our work, is of infinite consolation. We have just been arranging our own two portraits (mine by Madame de Rechten), as at present our principal sitting-room ornaments, with our little Paris *étagère* of marqueterie, and a set of four book-shelves along one wall;

and you don't know how wonderfully civilised that, with our own plate and linen, makes us feel, in spite of horrid common crockery and other discrepancies. In about a year I shall hope to be able to send for respectable crockery, and I should prefer, at this distance from a matching-place, to keep entirely, when I can afford it, to the pure solid French china. English stone china is villanous when chipped, and not good enough looking unless coloured, in which case there would be endless worry in re-matching after breakages.

"Our building prevents us this year from managing either a piano or carriage; but we shall have all such little extra pleasures by the time Guy brings you to see us. I am very happy, indeed, at beginning to gather round me here some of those collaborateurs of my inner life who are so inexpressibly dear to my heart. It is really the scheme of a railway from here through the Hauran (the grain region), and later to Damascus, and the putting it into English financial control, that has taken Laurence to Egypt; but he keeps it quiet at present, not to excite opposition. It would open up this part of the coast to a great commercial future if he succeeded."

It is scarcely needful to say that this scheme, which seems to commend itself to all who are interested in the country, and which would interfere with none of those hallowed memories which make us shrink from the idea of a railway to Jerusalem, has not yet gone any further. The road to Damascus, made under French auspices in 1860, is an admirable one, and has made that wonderful and beautiful place accessible to many; but a railway would be, I am told on all hands, new life to a country teeming with productions which it would open out to the world.

The two portraits above mentioned as adorning the sitting-room hang there still, forlorn in the unoccupied place, one of them a fine manly portrait of Laurence in a gown of dark velvet like a Venetian noble, by Henry Phillips; the other a charming youthful picture of Alice. Almost all else has disappeared, the inmates every one, the heads of the house into far-separated graves. Even the pretty furniture that made the room look "wonderfully civilised" is gone too; but still these two images of the departed hang on the wall, sorrowful reminders of a joint existence swept away into the still levels of the past.

Another letter contains further accounts of their settlement. The strangers had arrived, and were "delighted with climate and surroundings."

"The general sense of homeness increases with the improvement of the garden, the purchase of a horse, cow, pigs, &c., even with the adoption of a little dog, and the advent into the kitchen wood-box of 'home-made' kittens; while a pleasant incursion was made yesterday by the Wynfords, who found us sitting down to breakfast, and took it with us while their ship was un- and re-loaded, *en route* between Beyrout and Port Said. She will give you more satisfactory and detailed descriptions in her graphic way than I can write. And I am principally pleased with this visit on account of the facility it will enable you to have of picturing us and our friends in this pleasant place.

"I forgot to answer your question about our hours in my last letter. We observe the same intervals as English people at home for meals, only we *devancer* them by two hours. 7.30, breakfast; 12, lunch; 3, tea; 6, dinner; 8, tea. Half-past six is the latest hour when people come out of their rooms, old Mr Buckner setting forth with his hoe among the Indian corn and potatoes at half-past six; and the mornings are now so delicious that I shall get up earlier myself, I foresee, and rest in the afternoon to make it possible. Mrs Fowler and Mrs Cuthbert and I have divided up responsibilities as follows: Mrs F., superintendence of housemaid, linen, mending clothes for all; Mrs C., ditto, ditto, laundry, chickens, flower department (only embryo as yet) of garden; Alice, as you will guess, *food.* By about 10 I have made the *menu*, prepared the bread (every second day), done the more delicate preparations, as of croquettes, pies, puddings; and have cut up and distributed the different parts of the fresh meat to the soup-pot, roasting-pan, dripping-pot (the household economy depending more upon this process than upon any other), and am then able to hand over baking of bread and finishing of lunch and dinner to my German girl, and have the rest of the morning for writing or other work.

"Now the general arrangements of a life to organise use it up very much. After lunch we manage for ourselves the washing of actual plates and dishes, the 'girl' having gone home to her own dinner after washing saucepans and leaving the kitchen clean. This and setting away the food from the table takes at most about twenty or thirty minutes, and then we generally rest completely till three. After tea I give just now a German lesson to all the others to start them in the language. And about four we scatter about—Laurence and J. F. for walks or rides; I ride sometimes, trot up or down the village street, do some little business, or a sick visit, or 'play a tune' upon the village schoolroom piano. We shall soon hire a little trap of some kind, to give us a little more change of air as the warm weather advances. After dinner Laurence reads to us, or we read to ourselves. If I am pretty fresh, I consider the aspect of the larder-shelves awhile, or a quiet neighbour looks in for an hour's chat. I consider myself entitled to slip off to bed any time after eight o'clock tea, and Laurence, who is the latest, is rarely later than ten."

The reader may perhaps again feel inclined to wonder a little how the employment of Alice Oliphant—a woman so brilliant and eloquent, so made to fascinate and impress society (where avowedly there is so much need of every improving influence)—in washing dishes could be to the advantage of the world; but there seems a sort of impertinence in the question in the face of her own strong and happy conviction, and of the sunshine of that life at Haifa, where also what she believed to be the highest outcome of her life was soon to come.

In August I find an account of the journey to Esfia, the Druse village on Carmel where they spent their summer encamped in tents, though they afterwards left this place for Dalieh. Mrs Oliphant gives a pretty account of the journey which she made, being ill, in the chair which I have already described; and of the setting up of the encampment, with the vault adjacent, which they made their reception-room and meeting-place, and the big black Bedouin tent, which they adapted and augmented with bright-coloured mats to make a dining-room. Here is a notice, however, which the reader would be sorry to miss:—

> "Various acquaintances from the colony will come for a day or two at a time and pay us a visit. General Gordon (of China and Soudan celebrity), who passed a day or two at Haifa to see us, is coming to pitch his own tent near us. We were very much taken with him, and he and L., though they had not met since Laurence was a young man in China, seem to feel like two old friends. They say it must be because they are each considered 'one of the craziest fellows alive'!"

One would have liked to hear more of this meeting. It took place immediately after that strange holiday in his fighting life, when Gordon went to Jerusalem to make mystic measurements and theories, and indulge for once the dreamy side of his valiant soul. To have heard those two crazy fellows talking, as they wandered by the edge of the sunlit sea, would have been something to remember. They might not agree in their talk,—did not, indeed, as we shall see, for Laurence cared little about Jerusalem, and his mystic dreams had no connection with holy events or sacred places. But in their hearts they agreed upon the greater questions—the world that lay in wickedness, and the hopes of new revelation and better things; the dawning of great light, which seemed already to have touched their own heads, as the first rays of the sunrising touch the hills. I do not know that Gordon was ever able to fulfil that prospect, and pitch his tent upon Carmel; but his footstep is among the traces of those other feet on the sands, and by the village paths of Haifa, where they walked, and talked of all things impossible—the great revolution to be accomplished from falsehood to truth, from hatred to love, the turning of all the earth from evil to the love of God and His service,—impossible, yet by His grace one day to be most true.

"Gordon Pasha," Laurence wrote shortly after, 17th February (1884), "started from here for Brussels, and we had many talks over Soudan matters. I fail to see how he is to escape the fate of poor Palmer and Gill; and he goes because he is ordered as a soldier, not because he believes in his mission. I heard from him not long before he left England. He is a man after my own heart." One other allusion to a name of so much interest was made by Alice two months later: "We had a nice, long, very hopeful letter," she says, "of the 1st April, from General Gordon from Khartoum. He thinks a war by the slaves will in a year or two break out, and solve that question of slave-trade in a manner entirely unexpected by the world."

I may add one other letter, addressed to Mrs Walker, descriptive of the Haifa household, before this simple record ends.

"HAIFA, *January* 2, 1885.

"It hardly seems a minute since I left you all; and a word from either of you brings me instantly amid all the happiness which you made for me in the delightful atmosphere of your home. This winter think of us as being composed again of a pleasant little party—viz., our two selves; my youngest brother, Guy le Strange, an ardent Arabic scholar, who sleeps and works in two quiet rooms he has taken in the little German hotel opposite, and spends all the rest of his time with us; Mrs Fowler, a dear, meek, old Brocton body, who assumes as her special function the mending; my dear friend Mrs Cuthbert, of whom you know, who is head-gardener and chicken-keeper, and universal sister of charity to the sick and weak; old Dr and Mrs Martin,[1] whom we have just called from their post at Brocton, and who will, we trust, not leave us or our neighbourhood here again; and a young, cheery, little Mrs Casey, who came out to nurse Mrs Martin on the way, and will return to New York in the spring, after seeing this country. Ernest Buckner returns by this boat, after a year's visit, pleasant to him and to us, to resume charge of all that belongs to us at Brocton. The Government's fear of Mr Oliphant being charged with some political mission from England makes it almost impossible for us to buy much land here at present, so we are still holding a good deal at Brocton, enough to need young and vigorous administration; otherwise, we had rather hoped to transfer Ernest's field of operations here.

Our days pass very uniformly and very busily. . . . The principal variations to our simple programme occur in the shape of business talks or trips to the little town, longer rides or drives for exploratory purposes, and visits from people passing through, who bring us messages from friends far afield."

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[1] The reader may be interested to know that two survivors of this united party, Mrs Cuthbert and Dr Martin—the last remnant of Brocton, and of many hopes that seem to have fallen to the ground for ever—still live in the old house of the Oliphants at Dalieh, in the mountain village of the Druses, exercising an affectionate guardianship still over those simple and tender-hearted people on the Carmel slopes.

There are other pleasant details about the summer life among the hills—"three whole months in a tent on a breezy hill-top" among the primitive people, "the little nation or sect" of the Druses, "which is very much attached to the very name of everything English, and has also everywhere a special character for honesty, so that they make good neighbours and protectors for us;" where they "explored in many directions, entirely escaping all suffering from summer heat;" and where there was time even for a little tough study, as well as many beautiful thoughts. "Tell Guy I am beginning to master Prof. Palmer's hard grammar a little, and really like the precision and noble scale of formation of Arabic. But what a far higher mental calibre must have been possessed by the people who constructed the language than any mass of Orientals own to-day!" Further arrivals from Brocton are announced in the same letter—one gentleman coming "who is the principal agent for our property there, and has certain shares in it," and who is "the best practical farmer in our little co-operative organisation. We want his opinion about the agricultural prospect here, and advice how far to push that branch of industry;" while another comes to "take a rest after many years of hard business work in New York, but will keep his eyes open about mercantile operations, which we think can even be opened up between this place and the United States in course of time." I do not know that much was made of any of these schemes, except, perhaps, at Dalieh, where in subsequent years improvements of cultivation were introduced into the vineyards, and new kinds of agricultural produce. Amid all their schemes there was, however, one which had been like seed in a good soil. "Never mind about what looks like the failure of the Palestine scheme," Mrs Laurence writes; "it is in reality making sure progress." It had come to no joint-stock company, and no grand concession had been obtained; but over all the country Jew settlements were springing up, the future action and influence of which it may take many years still to decide. The scheme had been like the grain in the fields, dying only to come up in varied life.

"Have you seen," Mrs Oliphant continues, recurring to less practical subjects, "Sinnett's book, 'Esoteric Buddhism'? I don't know how widely it is either admired or criticised, but numbers of people write to Laurence about the contents in both senses. His skit on it, which should be, he thinks, in the January 'Blackwood,' is called "The Sisters of Thibet," and will interest you, if the book had done so in any way. I could not read it through; but other people seem to be quite fascinated by its occultism." "The Sisters of Thibet," I may add, was published, not in 'Blackwood' but in the 'Nineteenth Century,' and afterwards formed part of the little volume called 'Fashionable Philosophy.'

I may here quote one of Laurence's letters upon the book above-mentioned, which will bring us back to the other side of the life which was so pleasant and cheerful in its external aspect. It would be giving a false impression of that life if it were allowed to be supposed that the household work and arrangements, the agriculture, the colonies, the dash of Eastern politics, occupied all their thoughts. The very reverse was the case, as indeed the most wonderful proof of that mystic union and oneness of inspiration which was their most characteristic belief—and of the office of the woman in reaching the mysteries of religious truth, which Laurence had so pressed upon the consciousness of his betrothed bride in the months before their marriage, was now about to come. I open the other side of that fair and bright life, having now made the reader acquainted with its happy exterior, in the following exposition of another mystic but never vulgar faith, contained in the following letter, which was addressed to Miss Hamilton, a relative of his own, in reply to certain questions:—

"Haifa, Syria, 15*th October*.

"You are not the only one of my friends who has been fascinated by 'Esoteric Buddhism,'—indeed one of them is going out to India to become a Mahatma himself if he can. When the Theosophical Society was first founded by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, both of whom I know, and others, I was asked to become a member of it; but I had reasons at the time, which I have since found to be sound, which prevented me from identifying myself with it in any way. I believe the whole thing to be a delusion and a snare. Mr Sinnett himself, in the 10th page of his book, describes why it is so. What he says of the 'cultivated devotees' of India is true of the Thibet Brothers as well. The founders of the system, long before Christ, built up 'a conception of nature, the universe, and God, entirely on a metaphysical basis, and have evolved their systems by sheer force of transcendent thinking': passing into the other world, they retained these delusions, with which they continued to impregnate their disciples in this. As time went on, the Spiritual Society increased, forming a sort of heaven or Devachan, and in a higher degree a Nirvana of their own,—conditions which have no real existence except in the brains of those who retain in after-life the absorbed and contemplative mental attitude they acquired in this, and which they call subjective. Though how, if, as they do, one admits that everything in nature is material, you can separate objectivity from subjectivity is difficult to imagine. Practically the cultivation of what they call the 'sixth sense' means losing the control of the other five. Thus a preliminary for entering into the mysteries is that the neophyte goes into trance conditions. In other words, his five senses are magnetised, and he becomes the sport of any delusions in this condition which may be projected upon his hypnotised consciousness by the invisibles; and as these form a compact society, the images which are produced and the impressions that are conveyed are similar in character: just as a bigoted Swedenborgian in a trance condition would be certain to have all his religious impressions confirmed by an intromission into scenes such as those described by

Swedenborg. I have been for seventeen years in intimate association with those who sought to derive knowledge from such sources, and have some personal experience of my own in the matter, and have come to the conclusion that nothing is reliable which is received while the organism is in an abnormal condition.

"Although Mr Sinnett gives an explanation of spiritual mediumship which is right in some respects, and plausible where it is wrong, the Mahatmas and Rishis are nothing more or less than mediums; and where they are mistaken is, in thinking that the beings in the other world are unconscious of what happens to people in this, while in fact they are constantly engaged in consciously projecting their influence upon them, either for good or for bad. While a Buddhist occultism is infinitely higher than any form of spiritualism, or rather spiritism, that is known, it is nothing more than the highest development of it; but in order to avoid this imputation, it pretends to describe the phenomena of modern spiritism, not touching, however, those phases of it which Mr Sinnett's explanations would altogether fail to account for. The radical vice of the system, however, is that by concentrating universal effort on subjectivity, it is utterly useless as a moral agent in this world. A religion which says that because our objective existence is as 1 to 80 to our subjective existence, therefore all man's moral and physical needs here are unworthy of notice, is itself to my mind unworthy of notice. The foundation of it is egotism, the teaching the Nirvanic condition.

"What we are seeking for is a force which shall enable us to embody in daily life such simple ethics as those of Christ, which were based on altruism, and which no one after 1800 years of effort has succeeded in doing, for want of adequate spiritual potency. If some of us, myself included, have come into an abnormal physical condition, it was not with a view of finding out occult mysteries about the cosmogony of the world, but of seeking to discover a force which one could bring down and apply to the physical needs of this one. It was in this effort I found that trance and abnormal physical conditions were unreliable, though I am far from saying that the experiences gained through them may not be turned to good account, or that certain truths even may not be acquired; but unless these truths are afterwards susceptible of verification while in full possession of all our natural faculties, they should not be received or acted upon as truths. Nor is it possible to engage in the search for such truths (with no other motive but that of benefiting humanity, regardless of what may happen to one's self) without becoming conscious of an overruling and guiding intelligence—an idea entirely foreign to the Pantheistic system, upon which the Buddhist Esoteric science (which should not be confounded with pure Buddhism) is based, and which makes the Deity a sort of universal grinding-machine with no independent faculty of action or volition. However, this subject is too long and complicated to be treated in a letter; but I am glad it has been the means of procuring me a letter from you, and of giving me the opportunity of saying how much pleasure it would give, both to my wife and myself, if either you or your brother, or both together, could pay us a visit in our home in Palestine, when we could talk over those deeply interesting subjects, and I could read you the results of our many years' efforts and experience, which are now being written, though I am not able to say when or under what conditions they will be published."

The following curious exposition of their life and doctrine, in the visionary and abstract terms always employed, which they were in the habit of communicating freely to all inquirers, and they were many, who came to them—may, and probably will, interest many readers. Repeated examples of the same kind of answers to other questions, like these in categorical form, long letters full of similar discourses (I scarcely know what word to use: I cannot say information, nor would it be possible to use the word doctrine) in reply to vague inquiries—are preserved among their papers. I give the following only as a specimen of much of the same description which remains behind.

Answers to Questions.

1. What are the first steps to be taken towards a more perfect life of love and knowledge and power?

That love, knowledge, and power, which belong by nature to the human being, will most rapidly evolve in him, as he holds himself most free to discern in himself and put forth in humanity that individual spiritual emotion which in all ages has constituted the real motive power of great souls, and which in the present time holds possession of the breasts of men, because of the maturing period in which we live. Love, knowledge, and power, if they do not appear in every man, are within him stifled; and the phenomena of the social, intellectual, and religious life of the nineteenth century are for the most part to be referred to the struggles of this advanced type of manhood to escape out of those methods of living, thinking, and aspiring which have served their time in other generations, but have now become anachronisms. We need take no other steps towards a perfect life of love, knowledge, and power than these: simply to note the love, knowledge, and power that is spontaneous in us, and convert it into living—that is, action,—which action is at all times to be determined by the needs of our fellow-creatures, in order that we may work at the great body of humanity, to effect more equal distribution of the pure vital current throughout its form.

2. Is it well to investigate with free unprejudiced mind all the paths that seem to lead to solutions of spiritual mysteries?

All unprejudiced investigation is likely to be valuable, provided only two conditions are observed. First, that truth be sought for the betterment of the whole world, and not for any individual satisfaction or consolation; secondly, that the investigator allows no fact suggested or revealed to influence him, unless the opinion he deduces from it receives the strong intuitive sanction of his own purest emotion.

The first condition arises imperatively out of the simple fact that each man is by his feeling, his joy, his sorrow, his desire, an indissoluble fragment of the vast human universe, and that there is no law of human nature by which it could be possible for him as an individual, and to the exclusion of others, to be truly possessed of a perfect method of life. When happiness is temporarily experienced by the gratification of higher or lower egotistical instincts along the whole range of them, from highest spiritual ecstasy to lowest physical sensualism, that happiness is merely maintained because the gratification acts as an opiate, numbing the greater number of the man's faculties and stunting his true full growth. Later in this life, or after the dissolution of his earthly wrappages, the growth thus arrested must be resumed; for the universal human being must evolve, and then the agony of starving the faculties which have developed into monstrosities, till the neglected dormant altruistic faculties reattain development, is great in proportion to the meanness of that which was illegitimately fostered.

The second condition is imperative, because each man, while he claims nothing but a method of making the universal good, may not safely receive anything into his mind from the outside—that is to say, from other men—without submitting it to his spiritual part. If the subject-matter which he touches by investigations pursued for unselfish ends be of a quality to assist his spiritual progress, he is keenly and clearly conscious of his spirit's recognition of that fact; for it glows within him at the contact of truth like that which it produces, and urges him to let that increase of truth in him flow forth in action to his fellow-creatures. If the facts reached by research offend his own intuitions, they are, whether true or false, unfit for the time being for his contemplation; they create profitless wear and tear in his fine internal organism, and draw his unready energies into channels where they waste. Or if, in a third case, the subject-matter of the investigation, exciting in him neither attraction nor repulsion, gives rise only to distress, because he neither loves nor hates the possible truth, and therefore cannot know by private judgment whether it be true, this is a sign that there is nothing in the pursuit in question which really feeds a present need of his spirit; this is a sign that that spirit is seeking to make other promptings for other class of work, and that he is wasting time.

3. Are vegetarian diet and temperance essential in order to purify the body for high spiritual impressions and communications?

The prejudice in favour of vegetarian diet and abstinence from alcoholic drink, though harmless in its effect as practised on certain constitutions, produces in the case of others very dangerous diminution of the vital powers, creating openings in the deplete organism for access of spirits from intermediate states, who feed on the nervous elements of men. To impose it, or even urge it, implies as from man to man the taking of a very grave responsibility, though it has doubtless served in the hands of the deeply experienced at difficult junctures as a spiritual medicine. The shield of safety against mistakes lies, in reference to this practice as to every other, only in that attitude of mind in which the experiment is made—namely, if its object is the service of all others, and it is attempted with a profound sense of man's incapacity for correct opinion. At the start of universal development to which this century is rapidly ripening mankind, the equable balance of all the forces that play throughout the human organisation, expanding from the deep interior spirit to the outmost frame, will be best maintained, and it will be found that man's strength to think for and act for the world, for whose progress he shares the responsibility, will be best preserved if he utilises wisely all the means present in that world for invigorating the outer body which connects him with its surfaces. Of these things the One of incomparable wisdom said, 'Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man.'

4. What is the immediate destiny of a soul just left this earth, loving and beloved?

The craving to ascertain the nature of future experiences after accomplishment of earth service is, like many other cravings, not incidental to healthy normal human nature, and only accompanies a one-sided development of faculty. In practice many people at the present day do, without craving or seeking, see and communicate with those who have left this earth externally, but whose hearts are indissolubly welded into theirs, and learn that, except for the film of flesh that overlaid each particle of the vital form, life continues at first without extraordinary sense in each individual of any change, but in conditions which are obviously not accurately nor clearly definable to the minds of those on earth; but to seek this information by a private act of will is in the last degree prejudicial to a true receiving of it, offering the readiest of all means of access to the outer organism by importunate spirits. Those natures who, by outworking of the divinest thing that they can find within themselves to follow and obey, hold within them such a well-spring of perennial happiness that there remains no power to wonder or crave,—they know that in due time they will know all, and know that knowledge that withholds itself would impair the equilibrium of their present constitution: they feel themselves in eternity, and are not in haste.

5. Are there any spiritualistic communications to be relied upon?

No information received by human experience, whether spiritualistic or materialistic, is to be relied on as conveying *finality* of truth; none is to be dreaded if acquired in the true mental attitude. That people do see, feel, and communicate with spirits of all degrees of elevation and degradation is unquestionable to any one who has incurred, even without will-act, such experience, as fever is an unquestionable fact to those who have been struck down by it.

I may add here a few sentences of a similar purport from one of Alice's letters. The subject is much more universally interesting than any metaphysical inquiries:—

"As you say, it is impossible not to yearn sometimes for the day when the partings will cease. They so lacerate and tear one's very core. Yet except at weak moments I realise more and more that these pains belong only to the impatience of our outer natures, not to our essential part, which remains joined to all that it has ever bound to itself with the magnet power of love. And I also realise as the true sentiment of my being, the unfluctuating and the deep, the love of doing what God wants done for the people in the world — so of course I know that to have a formulated wish about living or dying, having others live or die, having sickness or health or sorrow or delight, would be nonsense, and a mere concession to the superficial impulse. My increasing sense is certainly that we are all put and held, or clearly directed to, the place where we can serve most some fragments of the world's great need, and certainly the love-power of our darlings who are withdrawn from their husking is an immense addition to our power in this life, for I can feel the love for the world that they pour through us has the magnitude as well as the sweetness of its purified condition. I can therefore understand much better than formerly *why* they are required for the grand force combination that can work with us on 'the other side,' even though it may seem they were wanted on this side too. They are joined to the army of high intelligences that work with and through us for the universal progress."

In the minute and laborious way of which I have given an example did Laurence put himself at the command of those who resorted to him. Whether these communications were dictated by his wife or were his own work alone, I am unable to say. I quote them as characteristic of the answers they gave together to many inquiries.

It must have been early in their stay at Haifa that the mystic volume, most curious and least intelligible of all his productions, yet by dint of these very qualities most impressive to the audience to which it addressed itself, 'Sympneumata' was produced. Laurence told me himself, on his next return to England, the story of its origin.

He had felt himself, he said, in a sort of restless excitation, full of the idea of writing something, but quite unable when he took his pen in his hand to gather together or express his ideas, and unable to give any reason for this mingled desire and incapacity, when his wife suddenly called him, and told him that there was something in her mind to which she desired to give expression, if he would put it down for her. They then began together, she dictating, but he so entirely in accord that he would sometimes finish the sentence she had begun. It was, however, so much her work that, after a chapter or two had been completed, he suggested to her that she should go on with it alone, which she attempted to do, but soon found herself, as he had been before, incapable of expressing the ideas of which her mind was full. He then resumed the pen, both of them feeling that it was intended to be their joint work; and thus the book was written. I wish I could feel any enthusiasm about this book, or even could say that I understood it. The strange story of its origin is very attractive to the imagination, and they were a pair from whom one would gladly have accepted teaching; and a number of people did so, I am told: indeed I am acquainted with some to whom this strange work came like a veritable voice from heaven. There is something in its confused and tortuous phraseology so unlike the incisive clearness of Laurence's ordinary style, so very different from the wonderful beauty of his wife's personal speech, that a perplexing sense of the toppling over, if one may use such an expression, of overstrained human faculty from the heights which it was vainly endeavouring to reach beyond, is in the mind of the reader—vainly endeavouring to understand, as they were to express, something beyond the range of flesh and blood. When sublimity is not attained in such an effort, one knows the melancholy alternative; and there has seldom been a work which has more exercised the general mind accustomed to receive with delight everything that bore Laurence Oliphant's name—more disappointed friends, or more satisfied those critics who dismissed him as one of the craziest fellows alive, and his faith and hope as the aberrations of a mind, on these points, hopelessly astray.

From their own point, however, this work was the fulfilment both of their theories and hopes: a something revealed to the woman, communicated to the world by the man, mystic truth only to be established in that way, only so to be taught with full efficacy to the world, which was at once the justification of their union and the reward of their self-denial. This was how they themselves thought of it, in a kind of ecstasy of accomplished work and tremulous humble satisfaction. It was the method in which they had always hoped and expected that the great things they had to do for the world were to be done. Advice to others, spiritual counsel, direction in the right way, could only be perfectly given by him, the husband and public expositor, when he held actually if possible, if not at least metaphorically, his wife's hand; but they had not hoped, so far as I can make out, that they were to be permitted thus to reveal in writing their new light to the world. It came to them as a heavenly surprise, the last complete and perfect proof of that counterpartal union which for a time they had doubted—a doubt which plunged them, as the reader has seen, into the darkest uncertainty for a time, the very valley of the shadow. But after that joint work at Haifa and Dalieh, that work which neither could accomplish alone, grand proof at once and outcome of the spiritual marriage, doubt could exist no longer. Happily it had departed before, along with the tyranny that probably suggested it. Now the facts were proved, verified, and brought to such manifestation as no one had hoped. And it seemed to both that they had found at last between them, in the way which they had already concluded was the only way that help could come, the lever that was to move the world. They felt themselves to have taken up, and to be completing by a new and special means, the work of Christ; yet not presumptuously, as making themselves His equals, but as His instruments in the work which He had begun. To be able to believe this, which they did most sincerely and with the full force of their being, strengthened by all the circumstances of their mutual labour, might well uplift into a rapture of spiritual elation and joy the wedded souls to whom this great acknowledgment of God's use for them and favour had come.

The book was sent to the publisher, with a letter describing its origin and the manner in which the authors wished it presented to the world.

"HAIFA, 12*th May* [1884].

"I am sending you by book-post the manuscript of a book which I want published, but which I doubt whether you will care to undertake—indeed I do not want it published in the ordinary way, as it is not an ordinary book. It is the result of the efforts of the last twenty years of my life, and contains what so many of my critics have been anxious I should tell them,—what I really believe, what I have been at all this time, what the result of all this 'mysticism,' as they call it, amounts to. In fact, it is a confession of faith, and certainly deals with a novel class of subjects [the letter here is unfortunately torn] . . . I have been the amanuensis, and so far as it could never have been written without me or through any other hand, I am the joint author. At all events, I assume the responsibility of its contents, and have written the Preface, as editor, to say so. Now as to the publication, I should like it to be published for me. I should like to know what it would cost to print a thousand copies, for which I would pay the full expense—and whether you would print it for me. I should not wish it advertised in the usual way, nor have any copies sent to reviews. . . . The class which will read it is a comparatively small though growing one, and I should like it to make its own way quietly and probably slowly. I believe, if published in the usual way, it would make something of a sensation, and bring down showers of criticism and ridicule: this, though I am not afraid of it, I don't court, though it would sell the book,—but that is not my object."

The following letter, written by Laurence in reply to a lady who had written to him with sympathy and understanding, though without having "personal use for the whole thought of 'Sympneumata' as we have felt obliged and charged to lay it before the world," will give an idea of his own feeling about the revelation while yet the thrill of its production was fresh in his mind.

"DALIEH, *July* 4, 1885.

"The experiences were so long and so extraordinary, yet many of them of a nature that could not at once become universal nor consistent with the present constitution of man, because of the excessive strain entailed by them, which confirmed the apprehension of the biune character of our being—that I know it must at best appear as a hypothetical idea for many people for a long while, or rest as a vague basis of life-theories in their minds. And I believe that whatever the clearness of my perception of the subject, nothing could have made it possible to launch it with the frail and imperfect vehicle of printed words to carry it upon the social mind, but the instinct that arose as the result of work among the weakest and most tempted of human beings, to whose salvation at this date I know no other doctrine than this could serve. It seems very hard to have to remember always in striving to call down God's fire of purity, that it streams as an atmosphere into a vacuum, towards all that is most foul and grievous in social ills. But who are we that we should be fastidious, and dread to see and know the laws of life-operations? What are we that we should dare to be satisfied with surface-decency, when we ought, like the light of God, to probe the darkness of caverns wherever they be? Yet, with our natural cowardice and superficiality, we dislike to remember always those very things in human earth-life that inspirations and progressions come to eradicate.

"This holding of sad facts before the mind it is that makes the martyrdom to be accepted daily, even while the glory of the heavens opens daily upon us—nay, because that glory opens! Not to rest upon the sight of heavenliness, not to linger in regions of poetic sweetness, only to learn the lesson of it all, and carry it on to the dark depths of morbid life on earth, has been the hard strain of many years, which yields as the result to all men that the sex question must and can be met and solved in the generations that begin: that in the concealed nucleus of social living and propagation, even there it is holy and pure love that will cleanse alone and only. But to say it, is well-nigh impossible: it has to be veiled and covered over, not to make it too distressing for all those who have not seen the glory, and only know the grievous perversion of life-facts. Sometimes it seems impossible to go on being apostles of such teachings, just because of the bearing they have upon the very roots of social disorder—that is, sin on earth; yet how unreasonable one is to fear, or feel too weak, and to be puzzled about the ways and means by which the truths or glimmerings of truths one sees shall be propounded."

Other letters of this description might be repeated almost to any extent. It may perhaps be well to show how he replied to some who were not in sympathy with his views or work. He had, it need scarcely be said, many protests and remonstrances, as well as much encouragement, after the publication of the singular book in which, as he believed, the problem of humanity was for almost the first time treated as it ought to be. The letter which I now quote was in reply to a very long, serious, and interesting letter, in which his book was elaborately discussed.

"Your letter of September 23 reached me yesterday, and I have not ceased since it came into my hands to consider whether I know of any answer to the appeal contained in it that could relieve the anxiety you express. I think I do not. This anxiety on the part of a large number of the best, highest, and most earnest people of the refined intellectual type has constituted the greatest difficulty in uttering the message that I am set upon the world (so far as I can understand God's will) to utter. This anxiety will be the most formidable obstacle to the completion of the utterance. All that you say and more has stood before me for years as the protest against my almost solitary duty which it has most hurt me to withstand. Word for word nearly all that you say rises as the long familiar wail of the good, the pure, and the aspiring, who do not feel that they are made to notice the regions of hell-like moral humanity that I must serve.

"I do think that you, or thousands who will show in various forms your thought, should think differently; for I believe that the elements held in suspense by such natures form a wholly indispensable protection to the operation of the doctrine which I dare not refuse to enunciate, but which must not be received too fast. I could name to you many persons whose sympathy with us was close, and who since the publishing of 'Sympneumata' have silently stepped out of spiritual and mental intercourse with us, some in fear of our thought, some in disgust of it. And they are right—at least I have no knowledge that they are not—by thus leaving work that is not theirs for work that is. Their choice is a sacred matter between themselves and God. I wholly disagree with the view you take (while I believe it to be a safe and necessary view for many people to hold) that the divine life in us 'transforms corruption into combustion.' I believe that it transforms corruption into higher types. I do not think the mission of the World-Saviour is to 'smite down evil,' but to bring order among that confusion of faculties which constitutes evil, and raise its victims up without destruction of anything pertaining to human life. I feel that certain servants of God are bidden—that I am bidden—to stir up and dwell upon every part of human thinking and feeling and doing, in order to discover and trace in them all the central vitality which is divine and eternal, and which must be wrested out of the filth in which it wallows. But I dare not say who else can do so. It may be that the whole system of belief, of which 'Sympneumata' is but an introduction, will be scarcely acceptable to any one in this generation. But I am afraid to go on living without saying that I know that God steps down through men and is the vital essence of all their forces, and wills to leave none unredeemed."

He adds that he was at one time moved to answer the letter of objection point by point, but decided otherwise, for the following reasons:—

"I am not aware that I am bidden to scatter vital force in any game of thoughts and words; and if unexpectedly it were more than a game, and I could change a view in any one, I should be afraid I had gone wrong. I think that if to redeem men from sin is the only object of our lives, we are divinely permitted each of us to hold the form of thought by the aid of which we can for that purpose best utilise our special nature in the special era of our residence on earth."

I have been intrusted by a lady, Mrs Hankin, who saw much of Laurence Oliphant during the last years of his life, with a MS. account of her intercourse with him, and with his wife by letters, which contains many interesting details of this period. This lady had been attracted by a phrase in 'Altiora Peto,' and being troubled and disturbed in her mind, had written to the unknown author with that impulse of seeking instruction and consolation which attracts the perplexed mind with so much more confidence towards a stranger than towards the most intimate friend. She received a reply of the most cordial kind, and very soon after an invitation to visit the Oliphants at their summer house in Carmel during her vacations (for she was engaged in the charge and supervision of a school), so frank and kind, and at the same time so surprising, for they knew nothing of her but her letters, that her heart went out towards them with an impulse of responsive affection, though she could not accept the invitation, nor ever came to any mortal meeting with Alice at least, her unknown friend in the East. The account of this strange and warm intercourse is all the more remarkable from the evident fact that Mrs H. found more perplexity than enlightenment in the mystic counsels sent to her by husband and wife together, and even in the 'Sympneumata,' which she received with almost devout interest, yet found herself but little capable of understanding. After the completion of that book, however, she received the following letter from Alice, which turned her wondering interest and sympathy into a warm personal feeling.

"HAIFA, *June* 10, 1884.

"I suppose you'll be taking rest of some kind, will you not, about this time? I am taking it in the straightening out of the household details that I have had to a certain extent to neglect for some months, while helping in the little book we have been about together. Jams and saltings do give great rest of spirit when you must do them yourself, as in Palestine, or let your people go without! I may therefore luxuriate in such forms of rest with a clear conscience; and I am often thankful for the ridiculous weakness of my body, which makes such play thoroughly legitimate by making it at times the highest form of effort in which I may safely indulge. Mr Oliphant has been taking long rides of days about this country of late, with friends who wanted to inspect it for historical or agricultural purposes, and that has been great rest to him."

Emboldened by such communications, and with the pleasant shock of finding in the mystic and ethereal oracle of Carmel so recognisable a woman, involved in cares so homely-sweet, and taking her relaxation in a way so becoming the cheerful mistress of a kindly house—Mrs Hankin ventured to ask whether the mysterious utterances of 'Sympneumata' were "trance writings," which she ventures to allow she had found in other cases feeble. This lady, though afterwards drawn deeply into the circle of feeling, if not of belief, produced by that work, avows throughout an honest inability to follow the sense of its mystical teaching. The reply to her letter was as follows:—

"27*th April* 1885.

"As it happened, I did dictate 'Sympneumata,' though we did not think of my doing it at the start. I went on, fancying it would return to

Mr Oliphant, but it did not. I never knew from day to day what would come; and it always flashed like lightning for a short time on my mind, and always left me strangely exhausted, as one is after strong emotion. And I never dared to think of it between times somehow, nor to look up the subjects except for names and dates, where there are references to history or literature; so that it all had to run into what little deposited information I had retained when illustrations of outer things were needed. I did not like to put my name at first, partly because an unknown woman's name would certainly lessen its chance of making an impression, and partly because, in fact, I felt as though it really all came from Mr Oliphant as much as from me. I could never say a word of it except when he had the pen in his hand, nor think any thought when he was not in the room; so he has to take the brunt of opinions. We get various ones, written and printed, of course; but already it begins to comfort a few, which is more than we have any right to hope."

Another letter follows, this time from Laurence, thanking Mrs Hankin for sending him a letter of high appreciation, not from herself, but from a relative, to whom 'Sympneumata' had been a revelation :—

"HAIFA, 8*th June* 1885.

"Many thanks for sending me ——'s letter. It was an additional evidence of the opposite points from which the book strikes different minds, and is encouraging, as showing that it need not always startle the orthodox. General Gordon, then on his way to Khartoum, who spent some days with me here, took the same view. He only saw the manuscript, and wished it written from the more Biblical point of view, as, though he said that it contained nothing that was not to be found in the Bible, yet few would recognise it, and it would frighten the majority, which it would not if it appealed more to the Bible as authority, and its agreement with it was made clearer. Mrs Oliphant was not allowed, however, to alter the form, and indeed found herself rather prevented from thinking about the Bible, from which we gather, as we told Gordon, that such references as he desired would frighten away those who did not believe in the Bible, and were looking for light. It is not written for those who feel they have all the light they need, but for those who feel that the old religious landmarks have disappeared. In regard to what you suggest about some account by myself of the experiences through which I have passed, it will of course depend upon other circumstances than my own whether I feel myself impelled to write them or not. In the meantime I am engaged on a novel which turns upon such experiences, and which, though I don't think it will be popular or amusing so far as the majority of readers are concerned, may reach the few for whom it is intended."

The novel here referred to is 'Masollam,' believed, and rightly believed, to convey Laurence's matured opinion of the prophet—or wizard, magician, as it seems more fit to call him in the light of that tremendous indictment — who had been for so many years something like his God. The book is full of strange things, and its machinery as a novel is solely constructed to bear the burden of philosophies and revelations much too great and full of meaning for such a vehicle. I do not suppose it ever was popular, though it produced a certain sensation, as everything he wrote, especially upon these mysterious subjects, was likely to do. I confess, for my own part, that I would much rather it had not been written. A fallen idol is a sad thing: it ought to be quietly, compunctiously put away, the fragments gathered up, the downfall reverently covered with a decent mantle, like the weakness of the patriarch. No doubt, from his own experience, a warning might be necessary for those who believe too much in prophets, and who are always liable to deception thereby; but this general lesson was not his aim. He had a hundred things to teach as well as one deceiver to expose.

Nothing can be more curious and interesting than the fact that it was while in the full tide of these mystical works, absorbed and exhausted by the effort, whether alone or in concert with his wife, to give vent to the most complicated spiritual teachings—that he wrote in short chapters, full of humour and fancy, the record of his own adventures and strange and varied fortunes, which was published in 'Blackwood's Magazine' under the title of "Moss from a Rolling Stone," and afterwards collected in the volume entitled 'Episodes in a Life of Adventure.' There could be no better instance of the double nature of the man,—at one moment absorbed in meditations which seem to touch the line between reason and unreason, in his effort to fathom beyond all possible depths the mysteries of man's nature and the cure for his ills: in the next, careering along the path of joyous life, with the free heart and ever-vivacious observation of youth, thinking of no mysteries save those whimsical originalities of the race — those amusing paradoxes and odd situations which give so great a range to the good-humoured satirist and delight the easy-minded reader. This was not the only occasion on which his double being thus expressed itself, but it was perhaps the most notable.

There was now approaching, however, a terrible crisis in his life, more dreadful than the downfall of any prophet. For about a year longer this mingled thread ran on for both: for in the life of Alice also, as the reader is aware, the sweet and soothing service of the household alternated with the high mystic outflowings of truth revealed, furnishing the same double aspect of character as in her husband: and the pair at one moment secluded in responsive rapture of soaring thought, and eager hope that now at last the talisman that was to reconvey celestial love to every breast had been found, descended anon from their mountain-top to the world, all friendly and warm with human interest, opening the doors of both house and heart to every passer-by in need. But now the clouds began to gather over the sky that was so bright. These rising clouds appeared at first in the form of added happiness and pleasantness. Mrs Oliphant's only surviving sister, Mrs Waller, with her husband and child, arrived at Haifa in November 1885; and partly on their account, and partly on her own, there were excursions planned to Galilee and the holy places there, of short duration at first, till it should be proved that the strength of Alice was equal to the strain. By this time the Haifa household had become possessed of a carriage, in which they were able to begin at least their excursions. And they were full of happy projects of all kinds, and hopes of pleasure to come. The letter of Alice to her mother, announcing her sister's temporary settlement beside her, contained a promise of a visit on her own part to England in the ensuing summer, and a wish to find rooms within reach of her mother's house, within walking distance,—"that I may go out and in" for "the four or five weeks of season" in which Laurence and she proposed to indulge; as well as anticipations of an ensuing visit to Scotland, and many other pleasant prospects. And in the meantime there was Galilee to explore, with all the holy places, as yet unvisited. New openings of life after their long seclusion seemed to be rising before the pair.

About a month later Alice wrote, this time to her elder brother, Mr le Strange of Hunstanton, the present head of the family, with affectionate thanks to him for the "noble roll of photographs" he had sent her of the old ancestral home—a long descriptive letter, full of details of the excursion to Galilee which had been so much looked forward to:—

"*Dec.* 20, 1885.

"We have just returned from a trip which frightened us a little in the prospect on account of my headaches, but which I managed with only one and a half, and so little loss of strength, and on the whole enjoyed very much. The important particulars you will see, three or four months hence doubtless, in the 'English Illustrated Magazine,' where Laurence will have three articles on it, so I will only give you the more intimate story rapidly.

"We started on Thursday, November 26, L. and I, our Druse man for horses, a German of this colony to manage tents, &c., a camel-driver with his two beasts, and the little son of our cook, an Egyptian, to keep him out of mischief, as his mother cannot manage him, and to have a little waiter and runner. L. and I drove to Nazareth, leaving horses and driver, and sending back our carriage next day, as Nazareth does not contain a single roof under which it could be left safely, in case of our returning that way; and being an open American waggon, it could not be left with chance of rain in the khan. That rough long drive knocked me up, and I spent the next day in bed in the Nazareth convent. Fortunately it caused no loss of time, for it rained, and the camels could not have gone on, for they are almost useless on mud.

"D. and K. had ridden after the carriage, and were with us at Nazareth, which they 'did' conscientiously.

"*3d day.*—The Wallers started early for Tiberias, too long a ride for me; so we went quietly on in the afternoon, I being still rather limp, to Cana, an hour and a half from Nazareth. St Helena thought it was *the* Cana, and built a church there, and the Dominicans have just built a convent on the foundations; but L. O. and the Palestine Exploration think the wedding in the Bible was at Cana-y-Jallêl, further north—though mind, I was very glad Helena did it, because we did not have to unpack our tents that night, as there was room in the empty convent 'parlour' for us to set up our beds, and they let us cook in the half-finished corridors, and let our people sleep there. We were now one more, having taken from Nazareth a certain Shtawy, well known to Guy, to protect us among the Bedouins, and to forage where there were no markets.

"*4th day.*—Had a cup of tea, and rode off with our own man, and made coffee, and boiled eggs comfortably, after we had ridden an hour and a half. This was my first day's long ride, and we did it very well, reaching Tiberias at one o'clock. The Wallers had ordered lunch for us at the convent there, but as soon as our tents arrived we pitched them and slept in them.

"5*th day.*—In Tiberias buying food for the tour round the lake, sketching and photographing. I took my little photo apparatus on my saddle always, and though very clumsy with it still from want of a master, eked out my sketching in a way that practically made the drawings a possibility, which they would hardly be with only sketching.

"6*th day.*—Rode, Wallers and all, north along the lake to Magdala, a few Arab huts now; turned next up the Wady Hamman, lunched, sketched, and photo'd, under a fastness cut in the mountain rock where the soldiers were let down in cages to dislodge the Jews by Herod; and so back to the lake and on to Tabjah, at its north-west bend. [Here follow several wet days, during which their progress was arrested.]

"9*th.*—Rode early to plain at north-east of lake, crossing Jordan and visiting the possible Capernaum (Tell Hum) on the way. In the afternoon rode up some valleys in search of ruins, and came back cold and hungry, to see our tent blow flat down when it was nearly dark. Very hungry!!! It blew a hurricane, and there was only loose sand for the tent-pegs. A providential wheat-magazine belonging to a rich Damascene pacha was there, and they let us sleep in the wheat and cook in the entrance.

"10*th.*—L. O. excursed, A. O. headache and fever; still in the wheat-vault; marshes all round.

"11*th.*—Better after quinine; rode off early to get away from the marshes (buffaloes in them); pitched tent in the heart of a great Bedouin camp, at the entrance of Wady Semack, east side of lake.

"12*th.*—From Wady Semack along the lake past Gamala, which visited; left lake at southern bend, and went to hot sulphur baths of Hammeh. Roman ruins.

"13*th.*—Rode in four hours to Tiberias, crossing Jordan at its exit from the lake.

"17*th day.*—Home.

"Thus it is established that I can manage such work if the moves do not entail more than four or five and a half hours in the saddle; so we may later make such journeys again. It was quite fine except the three or four days I mentioned."

It is pathetic to read this promise of travel and pleasure to come. It was, I believe, the last letter ever written by her hand. These fatal nights in the marshes had breathed death into her delicate frame. She returned to Haifa, however, to all appearance in good health, and continued so for nearly a fortnight, during which time she went up to Dalieh with her husband, to look after necessary business there. But she had scarcely reached her mountain home when the germs of insidious disease began to show themselves. It was thought at first, however, that there was no danger, until suddenly with an awful certainty it became clear that she was about to die. The following narrative of her last days was sent by Laurence to her mother:—

"*Feb.* 10, 1886.

"Our trip to Tiberias was simply the happiest fortnight of my life. It was so rare for us to be quite alone, still rarer to be both enjoying such interesting scenes, leading a life in tents, in itself so free from care and enjoyable, sharing all its little adventures and incidents and pleasures, a prolonged picnic *à deux*, with sketching, fishing, photographing, &c., to amuse us. We spent two days at a large building on the north shore of the lake. I had at first determined not to camp there, for it was flat, and I was afraid it might be feverish. On my mentioning this to Guy's friend, Shtawy, who went with us the whole trip, he assured me that my fears were entirely groundless,—that though at certain seasons it was feverish, there was not the slightest risk then; and this was confirmed by the Vakeel or man in charge of the estate of the rich proprietor, who was living there, and who assured me I might spend the night there with perfect safety. After the first night, when we slept inside the building to escape a gale of wind, we both felt a little headache, but this was attributed to some charcoal fumes from our cooking-stove. The morning following the second night she started feeling quite well, but during our day's ride she felt a little feverish and took some medicine. It then passed off, and we thought no more of it. I never knew her stronger and better than during the next thirteen days. She seemed to have got into training, would ride the four hours without fatigue, and quite astonished me by riding up to Dalieh, and at once setting to work to get the house in order for the three days' stay we intended making there. Next morning—it was our fourteenth after the night on the flat, she got up quite well, and went out to lay out some flower-beds in the garden. It was unusually cold, and I feared she might catch a chill; but she seemed all right until the afternoon, when she complained of a chill. She did not go to bed, however, till after dinner, and after a restless night told me she thought she had a slight attack of rheumatic fever. Ina sent you a diary of the course of the malady after that.

It was not for some days that I connected her fever with the fatal night on Lake Tiberias fourteen days before. I also had a slight attack.

"Dr Martin, who was with us, treated her homœopathically, and she sometimes seemed so strong, and to have shaken it off so completely, that I did not realise how serious it was. On Christmas she ate well, dictated a long piece of writing to me, and passed several hours of the afternoon in the arm-chair, occasionally getting up and walking up and down the room for exercise; but in the night she got delirious again, only to wake feeling free from fever and better in the morning. It was on the following Friday, exactly one week from Christmas, that I had my last talk with her. She woke free from delirium. 'I feel quite well now,' she said; 'the fever has quite left me: my body is free from all disease, and I only require to recover my strength. There is no longer any cause for anxiety.' Seeing that I looked anxious notwithstanding, she repeated, 'Indeed there is no cause for anxiety. I am only suffering now from a fearful spiritual pressure.' I asked her if there was anything I could do to relieve it. She said, 'No; but sometimes the burden seems greater than I can bear.' I then tried to amuse her by talking about our plans for the garden,

&c. I also said that I had sent for Dr Schmidt to consult with Dr Martin, and she said, 'I am glad of that, but don't be anxious'—and soon after she fell asleep. The doctors, however, considered the crisis past. The fever had left her for thirty-six hours, and they attributed the delirium to the quinine and laudanum they had been compelled to give her: as soon as she recovered from that, they said, it will only remain for her to get back her strength. At seven o'clock on Saturday evening I asked them how she was getting on. As well as we could possibly hope, they said; by midnight she will have recovered from the effect of the medicine. I was never more hopeful than when I was called into the room hurriedly an hour and a half later, just in time to see the last quick breath drawn. The doctors called the cause of death 'cerebral irritation.' But I know from what she murmured during her delirium that she gave it the right name when she said it was spiritual pressure. She had overstrained the machine, and when it was taxed by an illness which I don't think would otherwise have proved fatal, it gave way."

And thus this beautiful and beloved woman departed out of the midst not of a family only, but of an entire people who did not know how to reconcile themselves to the blow or to bear the loss. The Druses above, the Syrians and Germans below, all who had seen her coming and going for these five bright years, always full of succour, beaming with smiles and kindness, stood round her death-bed with aching hearts, unable to believe that it could be true.

I am permitted to quote here, from the letter of Mrs Oliphant's only surviving sister to her mother, the circumstances of her death and burial. The anxious nurse, better acquainted with every symptom of the illness, had not taken so hopeful a view as the husband; but even to her the end came with unthought-of suddenness.

"At half-past eight, Saturday evening, January 2d, as I was rubbing her foot and watching her face, she suddenly stopped breathing. We called Laurence in. It was only like holding a breath, —no struggle, no movement. She drew one more breath, and her sweet spirit had fled to God who gave it. Poor Laurence was just stunned, and really wanted nursing and attending to, but I could not be with him at first. Dr Schmidt[1] gave me all the help I required, doing all I asked of him in such a really tender and reverent manner that I am deeply grateful to him. I could not do all for her so well as I would, for stranded up there on the mountain there were few necessities to my hand; but I was able to place her so that she looked at last quite beautiful, calm, and with a smiling restful expression on her face, all distress and suffering banished. We placed some pretty mountain daisies in her crossed hands; and when Laurence saw her on Sunday, his first exclamation was, 'Oh, but you did not tell me!—she is quite beautiful!' I was so glad to think he could have such a last recollection of her dear face.

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[1] The German doctor at Haifa.

"Dr Schmidt kindly left us as soon as I could release him, and rode down all through the night with a lantern to Haifa (no slight undertaking, as Guy knows, over those steep mountain tracts), and went immediately to A., who, together with him, made every arrangement, and saved Laurence in every way they could. Though Sunday, every German in the colony came forward with offers of help. Loving hands worked both at carpentering and sewing, and in the incredibly short space of five hours everything was ready and despatched to Dalieh. There at 8 P.M. I received all at Phai's hands [a German servant, one of the colonists], and he and Dr Martin and I laid her in the coffin: no one else touched her. The grief among the Druses was intense. As one of them quaintly puts it, 'If five of our best sheikhs die, village not so sorry.' We asked for eight men amongst them to carry her down as far as the plain, where carriages could meet us,—a longer road, but an easier one than the ordinary way over the mountains. Instead of eight, fifty offered themselves, and these men simply vied with one another who should have the honour of lifting her. It was a strange scene that early morning journey. It all seemed to me like a dream. In front rode the principal sheikhs of the village of Dalieh, then the Druse bier on which we had placed her, borne on the shoulders of eight men at a time, and surrounded by the others. Then came Laurence, myself, Katherine, and Dr Martin (all on horseback), in single file. Good Phai ran on foot the whole four miles, so as to be handy in case of any accident. All the women of the village, who had loved her, and to whom she had so often ministered in their various troubles, stood round us (as they set out), and kissed my hand, all weeping. The bearers kept up an even pace without any shaking the whole way down beyond 'Aui Haud (three miles from the sea, at the foot of the hills), going as fast as our horses could walk, and never once paused to rest.

"Here we laid her in the carriage that Souz had brought [one of the colonists, who habitually drove her before they had a carriage of their own], and after a quarter of an hour's rest, of which we all stood in need, we remounted, Laurence and I now following the carriage closely, and Katherine and the doctor behind us. When we were more than an hour's ride from the point of Carmel, we were met by Mr Keller, the German consul, and his dragoman, in a carriage, kindly brought for me and Katherine; but I could not bear the shaking, and preferred to ride. Then on reaching the point, at two miles from the colony, Adolphus met us; and a few yards on, a large group of Germans, all the principal men of the colony, and all the foreign consuls and their dragomen and cavasses (guards). They all uncovered as the *cortège* passed, and then silently followed,—only the cavass of the English consul going in front on foot. At the entrance of the colony, and quite up to the door of Laurence's house, we passed through a lane of people,—almost every man, woman, and child in the colony, and many Arabs from the town, and a guard of honour sent by the (Moslem) Governor of Haifa. Had she been a queen she could not have been received with more respectful homage, and it was all spontaneous expression of love—personal love for her. Laurence felt it very much, for we had expected nothing of the kind; and I think so much sympathy really helped him to go through the hard task.

"A little rest being absolutely necessary for us all (we had been five hours on horseback), we laid her in one of the outer rooms, and covered her with a violet pall, with dull-red cross from end to end, which had been hurriedly made, and which I was glad to find pleased Laurence very much; but it was soon hidden under the numbers of wreaths and flowers provided from nearly every cottage in the place. A guard of Germans established themselves to watch over her—Schumacher, Lange, Dück, Kreisg—and after them in turn all the head men of the colony. At four o'clock we started for the German cemetery. Nothing could have exceeded the kindness and true feeling with which everything was made easy to us, everything put at our disposal: permission to lay her there, permission for Adolphus to read the service (this, too, by Laurence's wish),—everything, in fact, that they could do was done. Laurence was so much knocked up—indeed he was hardly fit to sit his horse, never having properly recovered from his own attack of fever on the mountain—that we all persuaded him not to go to the funeral; also it was raining hard, and in every way unfit for him. We found the grave lovingly lined with leaves. An immense concourse of people accompanied us, of all ranks and classes and religions; and when the last words were spoken, the grave was nearly filled by the heaps of flowers, wreaths, and garlands that were laid upon her. So we laid her to her rest, in view of Mount Carmel, and the Sea and the hills of Galilee; and poor and rough as the other surroundings may be, still rich in the grateful love of the poor people she had so much benefited."

An after-incident proves in a very affecting way the permanency of this deep and tender feeling. When the time came to mark the place where they had laid her dear remains, there was no one far or near to cut her name upon the stone, till the present head of the German colony, the American Vice-Consul, Herr Schumacher, the most respected and honoured among the Europeans, stepped forth. He had not touched a chisel for many years, but long ago, in his youth in America, had learned the mason's trade. And he it was who inscribed her name upon her grave. The blue sea murmurs close by upon the shining strand; on the other side green Carmel rises, with the mother convent, the head of all the Carmelite communities, upon its nearest slope, over the narrow border of cultivated land. Thus between her home on the hill and that by the sea she lies, the nothing of her that could fade.

I will not allow the reader to suppose that in the heart of the survivor this was an end. He too was stricken with the fever which had killed her, but not enough to give him the happy fate of going with her to the eternal shores. The terrible blank which we have all to bear fell upon Laurence for a few brief but awful days. He lost her from his side, her helping hand from his, her inspiring voice. But only for a few days. One night, when he lay sick and sorrowful upon his bed in the desolate house at Haifa, a sudden rush of renewed health and vigour and joy came upon the mourner. The moment of complete union had come at last: his Alice had returned to him, into his very bosom, into his heart and soul, bringing with her all the fulness of a new life, and chasing away the clouds of sorrow like the morning vapours before the rising sun.

CHAPTER XII.

THE POSTSCRIPT OF LIFE.

THE life which I have tried to trace through all its adventures by flood and field, its spiritual gropings and difficulties, the convulsions by which it was rent asunder, the strange experiences which it worked through, and the period of absolute and peaceful happiness in its penultimate chapter, had now come to its last stage. Laurence was left, when his wife died, more than a widowed husband,—a being forsaken, deprived not only of the consolation but the inspiration of his life. He dwelt but little, in the after sense of spiritual reunion attained, upon the short but terrible interval of desolation. There is, however, a very full revelation of the history of this dreadful crisis in his life, in a letter to Mrs Wynne Finch, the mother of his lost love, from which I have already quoted the description of her death. But this sad narrative is accompanied by many touching details of his own bereaved thoughts, and of the wonderful light which had come to him in the darkness:—

"I know you will have understood my silence thus far, and how for long I shrunk, as it were, from turning the dagger in the wound which, when it first came, I longed might prove fatal. It seemed so absolutely impossible that I could go on living without her; and indeed I do not think I could if things had gone on as they did the first week, when I seemed surrounded by an impenetrable gloom of desolation and despair. Suddenly one night the light seemed to burst through, and she came to me so radiant, and at the same time so sad at seeing me unhappy, that my own grief seemed to be lifted by the effort she made to dispel it. She seemed literally to be rolling some great burden off my soul, and I felt that my first duty to her was to be cheerful, and to fight against the morbid condition that was creeping over me. From that time I have continued to feel her more and more, and to be regaining my own health and spirits. She seems sensationally to invade my frame, thrilling my nerves when the sad fit is coming on, and shaking me out of it—flooding my brain occasionally with her thoughts, so that I can feel her thinking in me and inspiring me. There is no analogy with mediumship or spiritualism, for I am never more conscious of her than when all my faculties are on the alert. Nor am I alone in this. Mrs Cuthbert, who has, ever since Alice first went to America, been her devoted friend, and who has been our guest for three and a half years, is in some respects more conscious of her than I am, for she is more sensitive organically to such influences: and we are thus continually able to have the consolation of her presence, which has really robbed death of all its bitterest sting. Of course I miss her sweet companionship every moment, for these last years have been of unalloyed bliss, and every moment I spent away from her loved presence I grudged. And her loss seemed the more irreparable because the work to which we had given our lives, and the common object for which we laboured, and which formed a tie transcending any which could arise from natural marriage, seemed suddenly and hopelessly checked. I felt like a ship on a voyage of discovery, pregnant with the most important results to the world, fatally stranded and wrecked. But now all that is passed. She has shown how the work can be carried on more effectually with her aiding and guiding than it ever could have been with our former limited powers. And I feel once again afloat, with a different compass to guide me than I ever had before. Henceforward I live in her, as she will, if I am faithful to my own highest aspirations, in me: we are indissolubly bound to all eternity —more firmly wedded now than we could ever be below; and my great desire will be to let her love flow through me in the channel in which she wills it to flow, and which will assuredly be to those she loved so dearly on earth. As my great happiness in life is to know what she wants me to do, and to do it, and as God has providentially assured a means of communication between us by which I can discover this, I can walk no longer blindly. I believe in some way our darling will make our present loss our great gain, and that we may be spared together to a deeper knowledge of those mysteries which she has now fathomed, by which we may rise to greater powers of use."

The letter which follows, addressed to Mrs Hankin, the lady already frequently mentioned, in whom both the Oliphants felt the deepest interest, gives further proof of the strong conviction of Laurence that his wife's affection and solicitude for those she loved was felt and expressed with more warmth than ever from beyond the grave:—

"I know you will excuse a very brief note, for I am only just recovering from the nervous attack which resulted from a shock so unexpected, and am still weak from many sleepless nights accompanied by fever. We both seem to have been attacked by malaria while camping on Lake Tiberias, which only developed a fortnight later up at Dalieh, where my beloved one succumbed to it, after a fortnight's illness. I cannot write about it yet, but you must not suppose I am discouraged. For a week the gloom was terrible, and it seemed as if all was lost—the light and inspiration gone from my life, and nothing left me but to follow. Then she was able to come to me, and roll away the great burden of my despair. And now she never leaves me, and has explained to me why she had to go, and what I have to do, and why I can do it better with her on the other side than on this. And I would not have her back, though only those who have known her can imagine what a blank there is—a blank which the whole community, Moslem, Druse, and Christian alike, feel, and their sense of which they have manifested in a remarkable way. Even the German colonists say they feel her among them more now than when she was visible to them. But I shall hope to see you before very long, and to tell you what it is impossible to write, and about her whose angelic character it is impossible to describe. She has been very urgent in her desire that I should write to you even before my own and her relatives, and from where she is she knows well why. I hope to be in England in May, and will write and let you know when I arrive. She says I must send you the enclosed lock of her hair, with her love, and she seems to think that she may be able to be of some special use to you."

He gave the same account to me personally, in June of the same year, when he was in England, both of the death of his wife and the after restoration to him. He carried out faithfully the programme of what should have been their joint visit to England and Scotland together. She should have been doing everything with him, alas! as we say. But he did not say so. Why should he? She *was* there with him, a part of his being, taking her share in everything he did, guiding him in all he had to do. So he believed. And to hear him tell that bewildering tale, and to remain unaffected by his entire and happy certainty of its truth, was, to me at least, impossible. What do we know of the mysteries of life and death? Such strong consolations do not come to us for whom, perhaps, the long endurance, the aching void, the blank of separation, may be needful. But so far as his own consciousness went, his experience was certainly true.

These were the sentiments with which Laurence Oliphant took up from the brink of the grave what remained to him of life. It was but a brief chapter, and the reader may think there were incidents in it which seemed, in some sort, to belie its constancy and conviction; but it was only in seeming that the contradiction existed. He says some time after, "I do pity poor Madame de R., who can't get nearer to her lost one than Père la Chaise. The one place I avoid here is the cemetery."

The short visit he paid me was on his return from Cumberland Lodge, the residence of the Princess Christian, always his most kind and sympathetic friend, where he had spent some days, having been seized there by a violent attack of fever. He remained subject to such attacks, which came on without warning and with great violence, for some time. His appearance was changed, but the change was one rather of sentiment than of fact. There was about him the affecting cheerful languor of a life worn out, and from which its chief object was taken, yet which held head against sorrow and weariness with a smile, vowing to bate no jot of heart or hope. How sad the smile can be, and how heartrending the cheerfulness, in such circumstances, it is needless to say. Perhaps the shadow of the wearing illness from which he had scarcely recovered still hung about him, enhancing that effect. His movements, the swaying of his figure, which seemed longer and sparer than ever it had been—a something forlorn in the smiling look with which he met all kind and sympathetic faces—were so many tokens of the blow that had been struck at his life. Yet he was no less brilliant in conversation than of old, and when other members of the household appeared, turned at once from his personal story to the life of everyday, brightening every topic he touched with all the recollections and experiences and endless illustrations of which his mind was full, as in his best days. The following letter was written on his arrival in London, in answer to a letter from Mrs Hankin, informing him of a serious illness from which she was recovering :—

"*May* 20 [1886].

"If I were writing to you in conventional language, I should say I was sorry to hear you had been ill, and hoped that you would get better; but we feel that illness has its lesson, and death its use — have learned to take things as they come, and to believe that if we have no other desire but to be used as God's instruments, He will answer that desire by keeping us in this world or removing us to another as His service may require. Of this you may be sure, that if you do go hence, you will find her who has left me waiting for you. What you say about the book ['Sympneumata'] helping people, encourages me: for all nearly of my friends who have read it, or tried to read it, tell me they find it quite incomprehensible; but there are most comforting exceptions, to whom it seems to supply all they need."

The letter concludes with anxious arrangements for meeting the correspondent whom Alice had loved without knowing her. I may add here this lady's account of the first meeting, which led to a very close friendship and much communion:—

"I saw before me not the cheerful, brisk, hopeful man of the world, but a sad, weary-looking mystic, who looked larger than his height and older than his years, with thin, scattered, iron-grey hair, a worn, sensitive face, and tired eyes. He silently shook hands, and lay down on a sofa at a little distance from me. As I looked and wondered, his whole frame shook with a convulsive, vibratory motion—a strange shuddering ran through all his limbs. 'She is very busy with you,' his friend said.

"'She wants Mrs Hankin to sit by me: she is so glad we have met,' he said at last; and they exchanged some words about 'strong influence' which I did not understand.

"I sat and held his hand, and he talked to me in a gentle, pathetic way of his loss; of how 'She' had brought about our meeting, for reasons we did not know at present, but must look for with great watchfulness. By degrees the convulsive ripple in his limbs, and the strong agitation moving him almost to tears, subsided, and we strolled out, all three together, into the scented garden, and became very happy. He talked continually of his Alice till I felt as if she were really making a fourth with us, and became full of joy and exultation, as one might feel just enlisted in a glorious, dangerous service in which one was content to die.

"Then came the evening, the house now full of family life, and the talk general and on ordinary subjects; and then it was that I recognised the Laurence Oliphant of my photograph as, to a certain degree, still living in the tired, pale mystic of the afternoon. He told us anecdote after anecdote, as only he could tell, of his past life at home and abroad, or of his literary contemporaries and their modes of thought and action; and throughout proved himself the very perfection of a *raconteur*, absolutely free from egotism, vanity, or ill-nature.

"It was quite early in the following morning when my kind friend woke me, and asked if I would dress at once and come with her to Mr Oliphant. I may as well say that where everything had been so strange and unexpected, I found nothing to astonish me in this. I assumed that the 'Alice' of whom they spoke with such assurance wanted to help me in some way, and I was not only ready but eager to be helped. Mr Oliphant, looking less worn and sad than he had done on the previous afternoon, questioned me about the nature of my illness, which was a weakness of the heart, and implied that he thought he might do me good, though, as he was careful to explain, his work was not in a general way that of a healer of bodily maladies.

"I sat by his side and held his hand for some time, finding that a strong current poured through him, shaking my hand and arm with a powerful vibration,—a motion like that produced by the current from a galvanic battery, though the sensation was not similar; indeed I only felt at first a warm and pleasant tingling in my arm and shoulder, and afterwards a great exhilaration and exaltation of spirits.

"After about half an hour's pleasant talk my friend advised me to lie down for a short time in my room before the family breakfast: this I did, but the vibratory motion in my arm continued to be powerfully felt during the whole of that time.

"After breakfast, Mr Oliphant left for town. We had no more conversation, and made no arrangements for future meetings. He said 'Alice would see to that,' and I was quite contented that it should be so. The mental and spiritual exaltation was upon me for two days, and for a considerable time the faintness and other discomforts connected with my ailments were greatly ameliorated."

This will show, better than anything else could do, how tremendous a change had come upon Laurence Oliphant's life. His strange doctrines, his wonderful faith, the beliefs for which he had sacrificed everything, had up to the time of his wife's death led to many proceedings which were unlike those of ordinary men; but whatever these were, they had left his personal dignity untouched, nay, heightened by the natural nobility attaching everywhere to a man who gives to the world the last proof of sincerity and stedfastness. But now the foot so apt to wander into untrodden paths had got detached altogether from the solid earth. The thrill of strange agitation, the convulsive movements, the "strong influx," are strange and painful indications of the changed conditions. To believe that it was Alice—the harmonious and beautiful being, whose office in life had certainly not been to produce any convulsion, but rather order and serenity, and the grace of a trained and disciplined spirit—who now in her perfect state produced effects like these, seems little more respectful to the dead than was the vulgar belief which represented the departed spirit as communicating with its nearest and dearest through the legs of a table. Had it been possible, I would fain have drawn a veil over this portion of the development,—not of Laurence Oliphant, but of the wild belief which now burned with strong desire for palpable and evident signs. But it would not be sincere to leave out of his story these concluding scenes. The man or woman—perhaps the latter most—who has been cut adrift at a stroke from all he, or she, possessed in life will be able to understand, with an ache of sympathy and compassion, how the strained body toiling after the eager soul, which was ever longing to convince itself of the reality of its sensations of reunion, should have fallen into agitations like these, triumphantly received as outward tokens of all the mind most desired to believe.

It would be presumptuous to pronounce judgment even upon these thaumaturgic movements. There are too many mysteries of the spirit unknown, to permit us to come to light and arbitrary conclusions upon such a matter. Still the reasonable mind recoils from such scenes, and they cannot but be felt to detract from the hitherto unimpaired personal dignity of the man whom we have followed through so many wonderful episodes without ever finding him to fail.

This curious interview took place a few weeks earlier than the occasion already recorded, in which he spent a few hours at my own house, without the slightest sign of any such development. Others of his friends saw him in the few years that followed under the influence here described: but I, who had but brief and accidental occasions of seeing him, never had any such experience, and a great number of his friends were in the same condition. It is almost incredible, yet it is true that, while he was seen on one side of his being in this extraordinary aspect, he was at the same time on the other side the same brilliant talker, with the same humour and animation, and power of fascinating all who had the good fortune to find themselves in his company, as ever. In literature, between 'Sympneumata,' which was published in 1885, and the volume of 'Scientific Religion,' which he was already beginning to turn over in his mind, he had no serious work in hand; but he was still engaged upon the lively and delightful papers in 'Blackwood' called "Moss from a Rolling Stone," afterwards published under the title of 'Episodes of a Life of Adventure.' The rolling stone was not now bounding from hillock to hillock as in the youthful days, so full of strange and cheerful experiences: but still this "worn mystic," this man whose life was hid in a mysterious union with the dead, recalled and recorded them with the evident pleasure and relish of one to whom life was still dear and full of natural interest. The union of the two is more marvellous almost than anything I remember in biography.

He paid a series of visits during the autumn, one among others to the Prince of Wales at Abergeldie, whom he had met at Homburg in August and September, when he spent a month there. While at Abergeldie he was honoured with an invitation to dine at Balmoral, and gave to the

Queen, always so graciously disposed to listen to the facts of personal life, some account of his own wonderful ways of thinking and equally remarkable history. The Royal Family in general had indeed always taken a strong interest in him, manifested during many years past. Among other visits of a less splendid but more intimate character was one which he paid to Mr and Mrs Walker, when he saw for the first time the portrait which his Alice had painted of herself during her brief residence with them at San Rafael. He had not been aware, I think, of its existence and it was a wonderful delight to him. These kind friends, ever more thoughtful of him than themselves, allowed him to take the portrait with him; and it was the greatest consolation and happiness to him during the next chapter of his lonely life.

In the beginning of October I met Laurence again quite unexpectedly in Edinburgh at the house of Miss Blackwood, where he was dining, and where his always delightful talk was as animated, varied, and brilliant as ever. His conversation was of the kind most delightful to the hearer, though perhaps not so well adapted to the purposes of a biography as if he had been one of the monologists whose discoursings keep the listeners dumb. He, on the contrary, was the soul of the conversation, making others talk as well as himself, so that some of his own brightness overflowed upon his interlocutors, who sometimes, to their great astonishment, found themselves shining too, in a light half-borrowed, half-elicited by the sympathetic contact of a mind so fresh, so ready to respond, so full of original impulses. He talked out of the fulness that was in him about everything, with some novel illustration, some individual view, at the least some witty story to tell *apropos* of every theme. There was no confining him to one subject or another. His mind knew no divisions, had apparently no crotchets, and certainly no assumptions or pretension. Always humorous, always easy, talking not for talking's sake or with the faintest idea of producing himself, but from the abundance of an active and lively mind, to which almost everything was interesting, and that extraordinary acquaintance with every kind and condition of man which he had acquired by means of this very interest in everything he saw, he was the most spontaneous of conversationalists, never overbearing a timid remark, never omitting to notice a shy interlocutor. He brought out of his treasury things old and new, without the least apparent consciousness that he was doing anything more than all the rest of the company could have done had they pleased. To think of such a man as he appeared at that dinner-table in Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, fresh from the society of royal personages, and conscious as he was of a position more strange and unique in the world of mind and intelligence than any contemporary—and to imagine in him the convulsions and tremors of an occult visionary, was too bewildering to be possible. The mere idea of such a conjunction makes the brain go round. The last man in the world for such experiences the most acute observer, knowing nothing of his history, would have said.

His publications at this period, which he was busily at work arranging during the last months of the year while he remained in England, were many, and of an equally varied kind. The little volume called 'Fashionable Philosophy,' the lightest of satire; the book called 'Haifa,' which he intended and hoped would be the authority, or one of the authorities, upon the localities and modern life of Palestine; the 'Episodes,' one of his most brilliant and popular publications, a sort of easy autobiography; and a proposed new edition of that amazing onslaught upon his ancient gods, 'Masollam,'—were all getting ready for the press during these busy months; and he himself arranging, advising, discussing sales, &c., with all the keenness of a man of business. He was particularly concerned during all his literary career about the number of his books that were sold, and the facilities afforded to the public for obtaining them, and reported continually to his publisher the complaints of friends who were unable to procure them—telling of some who had besieged Mudie for weeks to procure a copy in vain, that great authority having professed to the publisher that the book was not sufficiently in request to justify him in taking more than so many copies; and of some who, equally unsuccessfully, searched the bookstands for the volume. "Of course," he cries, with humorous rage, "if that beast Smith does not expose my book it can't sell, and he is not fit to be leader of the House of Commons! A question ought to be asked about it in the House, or something done to get justice."

While all this cheerful bustle was going on in his outer life—occupations which seem continual, cares of the robustest practical kind—the other went on by its side visionary, sometimes with beautiful gleams of thought, sometimes so absorbed in regions beyond mortal ken as to bewilder the faculties of those who strained after him, trying to follow and understand. In the following letter it will be seen there is a mixture of both.

"*October* 17, 1886.

"I am so glad you have been feeling what you have described about the functions of Christ, and the attitude which we who are struggling for the bridegroom life should hold towards Him. If, as you say, a being like Alice can exercise so much power through us, how much more can He, if we open ourselves to Him? It is only since her death that I have been feeling this very strongly,—it was one of the first new sentiments with which she began powerfully to infuse me; and it is clear she is doing the same to you, which is a great source of happiness to me, as it proves how she is operating upon us both. Every time I feel her descent, I am beginning more clearly now to realise Him in her: for it is the function of the woman to get life from Him direct, and to transmit it to man; and I begin to realise the process of her drawing it from Him and passing it on to me, and this brings me nearer to Him. But you can reach Him direct, and hence can radiate more powerfully than I can; and from all women who can do this I can gain the kind of strength I need for my more external and executive work, which is different from theirs. Hence I seem to crave this feminine element in the degree in which burdens press and work increases,—and what is more curious, the life I thus get through women

I can give out unconsciously, and draw other women by it. I constantly feel a sort of magnet among them, and those who have aspirations feel drawn to give me their confidence, and seek my advice and help, so that I have become a sort of father confessor to some who were comparative strangers, and who have told me that they felt irresistibly impelled, from the first moment they saw me, thus to approach and absolutely to trust me. This is a great compensation for much suffering, and I feel this power is increasing, just in proportion as I magnify Christ's function, and strain up to Him through Alice. He is the connecting link between us and the great Unknowable, and for this cause He came into the world, that He might unite us sensationally to His Father and our Father."

One of the most remarkable incidents in Oliphant's history during this autumn was his sudden penetration into the heart and difficulties of a clergyman of the Church of England—the same who afterwards added an appendix under that title to 'Scientific Religion,' and who, having arrived at a crisis in life which demanded action, threw himself on very small knowledge upon the friendship and advice of his visitor, and thereupon formed the heroic resolution of forsaking everything and going out to Haifa with this new guide. "Imagine," says Laurence, in one of his letters to Mrs Hankin—"imagine my having read the lessons in a white surplice!" in the village church which the gentleman above mentioned found it his duty to resign. I may add that they continued together in very close friendship until the end of Laurence's life, his new convert being in many ways his faithful henchman, and in all his trusted coadjutor and friend.

I may quote once more from the recollections of Mrs Hankin an interesting scene which took place before he left England in the end of 1886, when she met him to take leave, "in a quiet country vicarage." A previous meeting, when the whole party who were bound for Haifa were present, and their plans and preparations for the journey were naturally in the ascendant, and spiritual intercourse scarcely possible, had been a disappointment to this lady; but very different was the effect now produced. She describes the frost-bound country outside, the falling snow, the desolation of the landscape.

"But once within, the sense of spiritual companionship filled us all with a great peace, and once more that internal tranquillity, in which

Alice could bring her full power to bear on Mr Oliphant, seemed to reign. I specially remember the afternoon hours which we spent in the room of our hostess, a confirmed invalid, often during the winter confined for days to her room.

"Thick flakes of snow were falling on the garden beds outside, and all nature wore an aspect of intense sadness; but we—that is, the invalid, her young daughter, and myself—listened for hours entranced while Mr Oliphant talked to us. I remember the exquisite tenderness with which he comforted and reassured the invalid, and how her tired face grew restful and placid as he held her thin hand, and, with the strong magnetism pouring from his own, talked to her of that other world of which the inhabitants were still moving round us in love and pity. There was no necessity for explanation or for breaking new ground, for my friends had read and appreciated 'Sympneumata,' while I was still stumbling among its involved sentences and difficulties of expression. When we had talked long on spiritual things, he told us much of his life."

I have already used in previous chapters the descriptions given of his life in Brocton to these sympathetic inquirers. Mrs Hankin adds that in all he said of Harris there was not a word about the downfall of that idol, or the causes that led to it:—

"In fact, the whole time seemed full of so intense a peace that all memory of past jars, and all thought of present difficulties or future dangers, seemed to have faded out. He said several times, 'How strong the influx is here!' and again and again the curious rippling vibration ran over his breast and shoulders, and he would say, with a half-tearful smile, 'There is Alice!'"

This meeting was his farewell for the moment to these sympathetic friends. In the end of January 1887 he left England, and his next communications are from Paris, where he paused to visit Mrs Wynne Finch for a time on his way to Haifa. Here he writes to his correspondent, bidding her not to pity him, as she did with natural feeling, on account of his return to Haifa for the first time since his wife's death. "We have no call," he says, "to feel compassion for any one who is being so tenderly and lovingly dealt with by God as I am, or in regard to any experiences we may be called upon to go through in the divine service." In the meantime his pause in Paris brought him acquainted with some of the occult yet professional, and, as we in England are inclined to think, partly theatrical researches into the phenomena of hypnotism, which to him appeared in a very serious light as playing with dangerous forces as yet unknown to the operators. "I am going," he says, "to see Charcot's hypnotic experiments some day soon. There is an immense movement in this direction here, and a 'Revue Hypnotique' is published. They will find they have got hold of a force they little understand."

"I spent two hours yesterday at the Salpetrière hospital, and witnessed the most extraordinary experiments I ever saw. It was amusing to see the most able physicians of Paris perfectly dumbfoundered with their own experiments, unable to account for them. They have got to the length of feeling that a law must be passed prohibiting people from magnetising one another, in consequence of the number of patients who arrive mentally injured by amateurs amusing themselves in this direction. They will soon discover that they are amateurs themselves, and must injure people unless they probe more deeply, and admit the existence of influences they still try to ignore. The priests, at all events, have the courage of their convictions, and boldly say it is the devil."

He reached Haifa in the end of February, and thus describes to Mrs Hankin his arrival in a place which all his friends had feared he would find so solitary and desolate:—

"*2d March* [1887].

"I was most enthusiastically greeted by the German colony and my own little household, where I found everything running most smoothly. I feel more and more how Alice is really the directing spirit. It was like getting into Paradise to come here out of the turmoil of the world—everything so calm and peaceful and lovely; and the presence of my darling seems brooding over all, and fills me with an ineffable joy and peace, so that the associations with which I am surrounded are a positive pleasure, instead of being a pain. I seem to have got back to her again, where she can get so much nearer to me than she could in the world. My head is now getting full of the book you have been wanting, and the pressure to write what it would not have been possible for me to write in England is upon me; but I doubt very much whether it will be what you desire, or be suited for your babes: but there are others to be thought of besides them.

"I am busy writing," he adds a little later, "two pamphlets—one for the Moslems with quotations from the Koran, which is being translated into Arabic; and another for the Jews with quotations from the Old Testament, which is being translated into Hebrew. It is perfectly wonderful how the light keeps breaking, and the quotations come in support of the thesis. It will be called the 'Star in the East,' and is in five short chapters: the first, the secrets of the world's malady; the second, the origin of religions; the third, the mission of the Messiah; the fifth, the triumph of the Messiah. I shall probably be engaged during the summer in amplifying them for the Christians. Then possibly it may be adapted later to the Hindoos and Buddhists, with quotations from their sacred books, for they all contain the same truth in their hidden meaning."

This pamphlet I have in English, the original, which I believe was translated into Arabic, but not, so far as I have ever heard, into Hebrew. It produces a curious effect upon the English reader by its many citations from the Koran, and the perfect equality upon which that book is placed with the Gospels. This, of course, was what has been called "economical," as specially adapted to those under the Mohammedan "dispensation"; and as Laurence was of opinion not only that the sacred books of every religion were, in their hidden meaning, equally inspired, he also considered as inspired all the men who have largely influenced the human race, whether Moses, Mohammed, or Buddha; although our Lord always held with him the highest place, as a being of a different and more perfect kind from any of these great men. It was perhaps also in compliance with the "economy" under which the primitive peoples whom he addressed were living, that his statement of certain of his more peculiar tenets is more exact and clear in this singular tract than it had ever been before. His belief in the original creation of man in a semi-spiritual body, a being containing both sexes in one, and in the change of nature produced at the Fall, when the two were divided, made into distinct beings, and for the first time clothed in flesh —is stated with curious exactitude. Our Lord he describes as having been by His miraculous birth restored to this double being, and thus made capable of communicating the divine breath to the world, which was the true and only bond of union, and by which gradually the original nature was to be restored. "And this combined force has been slowly growing in men's powers ever since, so that now many men begin to feel that they have the female half inclosed within them, and many women begin to feel that they have the male half inclosed within them." But this physical transformation was not to be attained but by much suffering and many struggles, both within and without.

"It is by the active and conscientious performance of daily duties, by the cultivation of pure love, humility, and upright dealing, and purity, that the frame can be prepared for the conscious presence of the other half, and for the descent of Christ as the comforter and bridegroom. When the body has, after long trials, been thus prepared, the next stage can be entered upon, concerning which it is not permitted to write yet. Enough has been said to show how Christ is making a descent even now into the very bodies of those who love Him; how this descent is the fulfilment of the promise made in all the existing religions, of the advent of the Messiah in the last days; and how this advent will prove the cure for the world's malady."

This extraordinary statement is nowhere, I think, so strongly and simply put. It was translated into Arabic by the one Arab convert made, I think, to its doctrines—a man not, unfortunately, of much credit to his leaders. "If it were printed or came to the knowledge of Government, it would mean my expulsion from the country," Laurence says; "so it can only be communicated secretly to such of the Arabs, Moslems, or Christians as would be likely to receive it." I do not know whether any further result followed.

"I feel bursting with what I have to say to Christians," he adds, "but my directions seem to indicate that it must be written from beginning to end at Dalieh, where I shall go probably in about a month. It was quite wonderful the accession of Alice's influence which I felt when I was up there."

Curiously, into the midst of the account of all these mystical productions comes a description of an entertainment which Laurence gave to his neighbours—Germans, Arabs, and Moslems—on the occasion of the Queen's Jubilee. Even this was not without religious meaning, for it was specially designed to open a way to dealing with the women, who were all invited—an event unprecedented in the country.

"I was asked to assign for the women a place apart, but this was refused on the ground that I could make no distinction between Arab Christian women and European Christian women, of whom there would be plenty coming. It ended by all the Arab Christian women coming, and very few Moslems; but this was only because it was Ramadan, when they can't eat or drink before sunset. I had considerably over 300 people. I counted twenty-three different nationalities, and thirteen religions or sects. Such a jumble was never known here before. Indeed, nothing of the kind has ever been attempted. I had two tents up, flags flying, the German band playing, plenty of chorus-singing, speechifying, &c. The Arabs gave two addresses complimentary to the Queen, and there were others in German and French. The Arab women all huddled together, but they giggled immensely at the novelty of their position, and absorbed any amount of refreshment. Of course, no woman would speak to a man, and that I did not expect; but it was an uncommon step that they did not wear veils, which Christian women are only beginning to abandon."

I pause before continuing and completing the record of his literary life by his own account of the composition of his last work, 'Scientific Religion,' to note the traces which I find among his papers of his interest and benevolent operations in respect to the Jew colonists. A number of petitions and representations of urgent cases, both individual and public, in Hebrew (with translations), in German, and, most curious of all, in phonetic English, prove that to the end of his life he was appealed to by these poor people, and acted in some sort as an intermediary between them and the benevolent-rich of their nation, who were not less puzzled how to treat, and how to understand, the colonies which it was their strong desire to plant in Palestine, than are the rest of the world. Much incapacity on the part of the poor Jews, suddenly plunged into a new world, some dishonesty, some idleness, a great deal of misery, appear in these records; but Laurence by no means seems to have given up his belief in the plan, or to have decided at any time, after many opportunities of observation, that it was bound to fail, as others less informed have summarily done.

He seems to have regarded with particular interest the Beth Yehuda colony, composed of Jews from Safed—the "city set upon a hill" of our Lord's simile, which still sits high upon the hills of Galilee, and is one of the last strongholds of the native Jewish race. The community there is chiefly supported, I believe, as are the Jews in Jerusalem, by contributions from the wealthy Jews of Europe; and the impulse which prompted a portion of them to settle themselves in the plains, and attempt farming there, was highly applauded by Laurence, as an honest effort after independence. "I think you understand its peculiar character," he says, in a letter to Major Goldsmid, "and the advantages of colonising Safed Jews, and turning into agriculturists natives of the country who have hitherto lived on the Haluka. With the present Government, the only colony which has a fair chance is one composed of natives of whom the authorities are not jealous, as they are of foreign immigrants. I hope, therefore, that the Anglo-Jewish Association will give this one a helping hand." He speaks of it in an after letter as "the best experiment of the kind which exists in Palestine,"—a "really deserving colony," with "more chance of success than any strangers could have." One hopes that these poor colonists throve, if only for the delightful English in which the following formal report of their circumstances is written :—

REPORT OF THE NEW SETELMENT COLONIE OF JULAM OF SOCTIE BENEI-JEHUDA.

1. In wich place ? . . .	From Tel-el-Fares, Sout east, tow hours ; from Tel-abu-Nida, Nord west, tow hours.
2. Woth was the name before ?	At present colled Chirbet-belled el Romsanie ; in Olden times colled Romy.

3. Omeny Dullam in clods in wolle ?	About 15,000. About 5000 prary; 2000 for planting Treas and wine gardens; 1000 for Wegitation, wolle foul of Wather; 7000 for crope.
4. Omeny springs ?	3 Springs largeoons; 13 Sometimes flood in difret directions.
5. Ofar to a city ?	To city of Kometre, 2 hauhors; to Damaskus, 14; to the rever Jorden, 3; to Acka, 13 hauhors.
6. Wath kind of catel ?	Wolle kind. Kaus, 8; Oksens, 10; Orshes, 4; Donkes, 2; Gouts, 30.
7. Plouing Tooles ?	Komen Arabien plous, 5.
8. Omeny buildings ?	One big Bilding, 38 jards long, 18 wide; 6 stables for catel; plenti of stons wolle redy to beld from the pondations.
9. In wich state ?	In the state of Damaskus, coantry of Kometre.
10. The name of the niborgs tribes.	The are called Benei Merat, Mochamedins, Arabians.

11. The land is divided between the Familes in dinomte of Fadans. Every fadan incloodes 160 Dullam, some ocupaing 2 Fadan.

A long list of names follows, in which the heads of the families are described as "Worcingman, Shoumacer, Fien Smith, Budcear" (butcher), &c.; with the number of the "childerin, boyes and gerls," to each. There is a pathetic air of reality about the document. The following is what is described as a free translation from the Hebrew original of petition enclosed with it, from a smaller and less important colony:—

"To the honourable and benevolent Sir Oliphant, unceasing in his good deeds, we come to-day before he sets out on his intended journey. We do bless him with all our hearts, and pray that he may arrive at his destination safely, and that God may protect him and be with him to the end of his journey. Up to the present time we have done all in our power not to become the objects of charity, and we are truly grateful to his honour for the former many kindnesses which he has voluntarily shown us. And his past kindness makes us bold enough to ask him to afford us some relief in this time of our great need.

"The honourable Abraham Magal was nominated to act as our superintendent, to afford us protection, and to inspire us with courage and strengthen us in our weakness. But to our sorrow and trouble he died; for God took his soul under His wings, and thus we are left without help and protection. We are now thirty-two souls, reduced to the lowest extremity, so that our situation has become unendurable, and so that we are compelled to send the brave Fishel Solomon as our representative to lay our matter before you, to whom we call God as our Redeemer."

I resume the record of his life, by the following account of his projects and consolations a little while after his return to Haifa, in a letter to Mrs Walker :—

"Haifa, 29*th March* 1887.

"I am sorry, too, that we had not more opportunity of quiet conversation than was possible in London, because so much has been developing in my mind and experience since Alice left me; but no doubt there was some good reason for it, and I think before long you may have an opportunity of reading a good deal of it, for I think I shall shortly begin a book dealing with the whole subject in a way that he that runs may read, which was not the case with 'Sympneumata.' . . . So far from feeling saddened by the surroundings which recall Alice at every moment, I am now feeling a happiness and joy which I thought when I left this I never could feel again. I can walk in the garden with her, and seem to feel her suggesting what ought to be done. Then I like to feel living in the midst of a community who all knew and loved her. There is scarcely a German cottage in which her photograph is not hanging up framed. The Druses in the mountains treat the monument I have put up to her with the greatest veneration. It is a sacred spot to them, for they say that, although she was not conscious of it, she was a Druse all the time, and is one now. Your picture is a great pleasure to me: it is in my bedroom, and my own fancy suggests that the expression of it seems to change, but of course that is only the effect of one's own imagination—though it is none the less strange that one's imagination (whatever that may be) should have such power."

As the summer of 1887 advanced, the usual move to Dalieh was made, and from that place Laurence wrote to Mrs Hankin, intimating that his great work had been begun:—

"DALIEH, *July* 5 [1887].

"I can only write you a short letter this time, for a reason that I know you will rejoice in—viz., that I am hard at work writing the book you have been so long urging. I have already written what amounts to a third of 'Sympneumata,' and feel there is a great deal more. The influx began to press powerfully into me, as soon as I felt myself in the absolute solitude of the mountain, with its still and tranquil beauty. I have fitted up the little room in which my Alice left me as a sanctum, in more senses of the word than one, hung it round with curtains, and carpeted it, and put up the oil-painting of her, and here she visits me while I write, and I feel her thoughts impregnating mine, and forcing themselves into expression, and unfolding wonderful things to me so simply that

I hope all who run may read and understand. This was why she did not want me to write when you were urging me to do so in London. It was impossible in that polluted magnetic atmosphere for her to come to me as she can here, where her spirit lingered to the last moment."

"I am so absorbed in my work," he writes a month later, "that I grudge every moment taken from it. Alice is doing wonders, and developing ideas in me of which I had no conception. It is therefore as interesting to write as a novel, for I never know what is coming next. I have already written an amount equal to 'Sympneumata,' and it seems developing. It seems necessary that I should go with it to England when it is finished, so I hope it may not be long before I see you again. I don't suppose I shall stay long in England, as I have work to do both in America and Japan, so I suppose I shall return hither by that route. My life here is extremely calm and uneventful. . . . The book is the great thing: it states the whole spiritual situation, and if people want to know what I believe, they will find there, I hope, an intelligible account of it. My whole mornings seem spent with Alice, and I think she has used the time to put new strength into me.

Another letter to Mrs Walker announces the completion of the work:—

"HAIFA, 25*th September* 1887.

"I have just finished a book which has quite absorbed me during my stay on the mountain. It is the final conclusion at which I have arrived after twenty-three years' struggle, and I feel Alice inspiring every word of it. It was written in the room where she died, with your picture on an easel by the side of my writing-table. It seemed to help to bring her. It stands before me now, and I sometimes fancy I can detect changes in the expression. The book came with remarkable clearness and force, and most of what it contains is new to me; but it solves and explains so much, that I hope it may be a help to many. When I had finished it, I could not help ejaculating, 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.' It seemed such an ample compensation for all I have suffered and gone through—such a consolation to think that one's life has not been wasted. But whether Blackwood will publish it, or what the public will say to it, is a very different question."

His letters to his publisher at this period are also full of the book which was his prevailing occupation. "It will be altogether an extraordinary book," he says, evidently without the least idea of an author's vanity, regarding it as something apart from himself. "I can't help thinking I will explode rather noisily on the sleeping consciences of the public." Later he desires that nothing may be printed beyond the tenth chapter, as "new lights flash upon me containing ideas which have to be interpolated."

"In fact, I never know when the book is really finished. I have never written anything which seemed to descend into my brain with such an irresistible force and demand to be put into words, and I am as much surprised at what I write as any of my readers are likely to be. I never enjoyed such a period of delicious rest and peace as I felt while writing this. . . . I think you will find the last part of my book much more easy to understand than the first. I shall call it, I think, 'The Divine Feminine.'"

This title, however, was not adopted, probably from the alarm with which it would be received by all friends; but it was not till some time after that the title—not a very successful one—by which it was finally published was at last decided upon. Nothing could exceed his satisfaction in having accomplished this work.

The last time I ever saw him was in the early summer of 1887 in Mr Blackwood's rooms in London. The impression he made upon me on this occasion was that he was much more entirely absorbed in his religious views than I had ever seen him, and cared less for any intercourse which was not upon that subject. A carelessness, almost impatience, of other topics and persons than those occupied like himself with one all-engrossing inquiry, which I had never remarked before, seemed to possess him. "I have laid my egg," he said, with a laugh of excitement and half-defiance, as if forestalling any criticism.

The much more intimate understanding and sympathy of his mother-in-law, Mrs Wynne Finch, to whom since his wife's death he had shown a special attachment and devotion, perceived the same change on his appearance in her house in Paris immediately before coming to London. She found him weak and worn out in frame, which indeed was partly to be accounted for by the fact that during his long mystical retirement in Dalieh he had lived entirely on rice, while wound up to the utmost possible spiritual excitement and strain of physical work.

I may be pardoned for adding here, that so little did I find his promise of greater intelligibility carried out in his new work, that, taking the book away with me in sheets, for the purpose of reviewing it in a newspaper to which I happened to have access at the moment, I turned my proposed review, in despair, into a rapid sketch of the circumstances and promise with which the book was about to come into the world, the remarkable character of the author, and the certainty that such a man, writing upon a subject which had occupied him for so many years, must, in the nature of things, merit the most respectful hearing, and have much that was interesting and important to say. I have, however, found it an excellent argument for humility to discover since, that many people worthy of all respect have found in it the power and instruction its author so fervently believed in, but which, for my own part, I was unable to see.

With the publication of this book Laurence Oliphant may, I think, be said to disappear from that place in the world which he had hitherto held. He was lost among a crowd of inquirers, of sympathisers, of people anxious to be convinced of his supernatural experiences and to share his faith in them. I discover with surprise, yet with a certain satisfaction which I have no doubt many spectators of the last acts of his life will share, that by this time, in the opinion of some of his anxious friends, the first warmth of inspiration breathed into him by the spirit of his wife had begun to fail, and that he was no longer so strongly moved by the "influx" as he had been when he came to England straight from her deathbed. It could scarcely be expected that he himself, so fully convinced as he was of the "great work" which remained to be done, would readily accept this as a sign that it would be better for him to retire a little and be silent, or to acknowledge himself at all deserted by what had been his guiding star. Another expedient was thought of to bring back the force of inspiration, and keep him in full strength for that work. At this point the impressions of his friend Mrs Hankin come in to instruct us as to the state of his mind and wishes:—

"As soon as we met I perceived that the singular spiritual force, which to my consciousness differentiated Mr Oliphant from all other men whom I had ever met, was no longer, as before, almost of the nature of a persistent attribute allied to his own original character. The sense of great spiritual power no longer accompanied his mere presence. It was only when the sudden spiritual visitation came objectively upon him in a strange rippling vibration that I recognised the influx of his Alice, and the sense of spiritual uplifting and exhilaration which I had formerly experienced. I soon found that his whole heart was set upon a period of usefulness in England; but to support the chain of magnetic life which he poured out on others, it was essential that he should be helped by the magnetism of some woman who sympathised with his aims and understood his views. As I happened to be at hand, he asked me to help him."

This lady, always full of sense and a moderate though strongly believing view of the new faith, and who had before now opposed her instinctive consciousness of what was and what was not practicable, in the way of its propagation and development, to his more eager desires, hesitated for some time before becoming his "colleague," according to his own phraseology; but eventually did so, I believe, for a short time, though always reluctantly, and became—in a way as mysterious as was the former manifestation, if not more so—the medium by which that "strange vibration" and "rippling" of nerves and frame, which, indicating the coming in of the "influx" into his soul, was communicated to him, the spirit pouring its influence through her hands as it had done at first through his own. These are mysteries with which only a mind entirely in sympathy should attempt to meddle. And one cannot but feel that while it was sufficiently hurtful to his individuality and personal dignity, as well as to the balance of his mind, to be always on the strain of expectation for communications from the unseen, it must have been still more so when these communications had to be procured through the ministrations of another.

Very few indications from himself come out of the mystical world which enclosed him after this point. He appears for a moment now and then in a passing visit, in a glimpse, and then disappears again—but the indications are vague. He went to America in the spring of 1888, and returned early in August. During this short time, however, an important event occurred, which I cannot describe better than in his own words. The following letter to Mrs Wynne Finch is the first, as far as I am aware, received from him after his return. He had gone straight, on landing, to the house of Mrs Hankin at Malvern :—

MALVERN, *August* 4, 1888.

"I am so sorry that I missed seeing you, but events have proved too strong for me, and I shall not be in London for a fortnight. I landed at Plymouth, and came over here, to carry out a purpose which forced itself upon me somewhat suddenly during my passage. I am afraid you will think it somewhat strange, and I wish I could have explained it to you by word of mouth instead of by letter; but still I think you will understand it better than most people. I was induced by a curious combination of circumstances to make a pilgrimage 1100 miles from New York to see a lady of whom I had only heard, but who I found to be a most remarkable person. She had reached all my results—nothing in 'Scientific Religion' was new to her; but she had never read anything either Alice or I had written, and scarcely knew of me. Her faculty of internal insight is far more intense than that of any one I ever met, and we felt after an hour's interview that we must combine our forces, as my work with women is too difficult and compromising for me to carry on alone. Still the thought of marriage never entered our heads, as she is a strong-minded person, but she decided to come to Haifa with me. But on the passage she was brought into very close relations with Alice, and at the same time felt that Alice wanted me to give her the protection of my name. So I decided to come here to have a civil ceremony performed. She realises Alice most intensely, and brings her closer to me than I ever felt her, so that instead of in any way separating me from her, it unites me more closely, while she can work through us combined more powerfully than through me alone. The lady's name is Rosamond Dale Owen. She is the daughter of Robert Dale Owen, and granddaughter of Robert Owen—both men who were celebrated in their day, the former especially so. I am sure you would like her if you knew her. I am obliged to stay here for the fortnight's residence that is required by law, and shall then probably be a fortnight or three weeks more between London and Paris, reaching Haifa, I hope, somewhere about the end of September."

This prospect was never to be realised. The marriage took place, to the great astonishment of many friends who only heard it when it was announced by the papers, and to whom naturally the reasons for this step were unknown. And he had not been married more than a day or two when he was seized with the painful illness of which he died, so that the lady, who thus forsook her country and her home to help in his sacred mission, as he understood it, found herself almost from the moment of her marriage confined to the functions of a nurse, perhaps not less sacred, and which she discharged with the utmost devotion. In a second letter to Mrs Wynne Finch, before this event, in which Laurence expressed a grateful appreciation of her kind and affectionate reception of a piece of intelligence which could scarcely be agreeable to her, and understanding of his motives—he insists still further upon the peculiar circumstances under which he acted :—

"Your letter was a great comfort to me, for it showed me that you understood my motives. It is very difficult for people to realise that my marriage can actually draw me closer and cement more firmly my spiritual tie with Alice than ever; but we are discovering so many mysteries unknown to the world. I should have been myself the last person to think it possible a year ago. I am sorry I shall not have an opportunity of explaining it in a way that is impossible in a letter, but of this you may be quite sure, that the only difference it will make in our relations to each other will be to increase the warmth of my love for you. It will be very kind of you to tell [here various friends are mentioned by name], and try and explain that this does not imply any want of faithfulness to Alice's memory, but is, in fact, only carrying out her wishes. It is a duty imposed upon me by the necessities of the situation. As the number of people, especially women, increases with whom I have to deal, it has become absolutely necessary for her to have a human assistant of her own sex. She gets so exhausted with the amount of work she has to do, that I feel her fatigue. It is a great mistake to suppose that beings in the invisible have an unlimited supply of nervous magnetism: they get tired just as we do."

Explanations almost identical with the above were made to Mrs Walker and to various other friends.

The marriage took place at Malvern on the 16th August 1888, and the above letter is the last I have from his own hand. A few days after their marriage Laurence and his new wife went to Surbiton to pay a visit to the always kind friends of a former period of life, Mr and Mrs Walker, who had so tenderly befriended Alice Oliphant in California, and whose constant friendship had followed Laurence through every vicissitude. They had scarcely arrived there when he was attacked by illness so violent as to put his life in immediate danger. And in future all the correspondence that concerned him consists of a series of bulletins, the first of which is dated from Mr Walker's house at Surbiton. "My husband had a most dangerous crisis yesterday and the night before," Mrs Rosamond Oliphant wrote, on the 29th August. "The attack has been malignant pleurisy: the doctors gave us almost no hope, and are astonished at the turn for the better, but I feel assured that the unseen powers guarding my dear husband have lifted him up." From this time till the end of October he, his wife, and his Bulgarian servant Yani, remained in the house of these invaluable and devoted friends, who, though with sickness and trouble of their own in their family, afforded every alleviation that kindness and friendship could give to the sufferer. Such friends few men secure for themselves. Nor was it even made easier to Mr and Mrs Walker by kindred beliefs or discipleship. The bond between them was one of human affection alone, and unceasing bounty and goodness on their part to him who still lived and suffered, as to her whom they had loved and sheltered in her Californian exile. The record of such a good deed, continuous through months of helplessness, is almost a unique one.

Better and better as the time went on were the sanguine accounts that were given of him week after week by the strong faith of the wife whose confidence in "the unseen powers" was so undoubting; but she was yet obliged to allow from time to time that his progress was slow. In the beginning of November, a change of air being considered desirable, he was removed to York House, Twickenham, the interesting historical mansion inhabited by other kind friends, Sir Mountstuart and Lady Grant Duff, to which Laurence had a cordial invitation, and where the sad yet still sanguine party were housed in a suite of beautiful and spacious rooms, with one of the most charming of English landscapes—the softly flowing Thames on one side, the great trees and velvet lawns on the other—under their windows. Their hostess gave up her own sitting-room to the comfort of the invalid, then able to be up for some hours every day, and again the hopes of the anxious group surrounding him rose high. He had been condemned by all the doctors consulted, who considered his case hopeless from the first; but the hopes of the sufferer, and those immediately about him, were fixed on other help than those of medicine. While he was at York House, Mr Haskett Smith, one of the gentlemen who had been associated with him for some years at Haifa

—his right hand and most trusted helper there—was summoned to his sick-bed, and it was hoped for a time that the power in him, combined with that of Mrs Oliphant, might still suffice to work the miracle they looked for. It did so, they flattered themselves, at least to the extent of keeping the patient free to a great degree from pain. The physician who attended him is reported to have said that "he had never known a case before in which the patient had not suffered weeks of agony, yet so far as this part of his disease went, he suffered almost no pain."

All the signs, however, which buoyed his attendants up, his own cheerful and patient confidence, and the determined faith which would not acknowledge any possible failing, had at last to give way to the certainty which could not be ignored. Throughout his long illness Laurence had been to a considerable extent brought back, out of the close circle of believers and mystical experimentalists who had surrounded him on his return from Haifa in the beginning of the year—to the friends of his life, from many of whom he received visits while he lay, slowly dying as everybody believed, but as full of humour, of interest in life, of genial talk as ever, making that chamber of sickness the brightest of reception-rooms, and leaving the most characteristic impression of his own always engaging and brilliant individuality upon his visitors. This had never altogether ceased to be the case at any time, but it revived in the most affecting and beautiful way in this last chapter of his life, in which not only his intellectual gifts and perceptions, but the delightful light-heartedness and fun, to use a familiar but most expressive word, which had made intercourse with him a continual exhilaration, came back to him with all their original freshness. Even his wife, who would naturally be little disposed to dwell upon that side of his character, speaks of herself in the midst of the long watches of these weary nights as "more amused with his wit" than she had ever been with any one before. As the conclusion drew nearer, the brightness of his outlook did but increase. It had been for some time a heavy thought to him that he might linger for years as a hopeless invalid confined to his bed: but even that feeling disappeared a few weeks before the end in the cheerful conviction that "I can carry on Christ's work on a sick-bed, if He so wishes it, as if I were well."

That dear and sacred name was ever on his tongue. There had been times in his life when he had spoken it with an accent of perhaps less reverence than was congenial to listeners probably less devout than he, but holding a more absolute view of our Lord's position and work—as there had been times when he had called himself not a Christian, in the ordinary meaning of the word. But no one could doubt now of his entire and loving reception of that name as his own highest hope as well as that of all the world. A day or two before his death he called his faithful nurse early in the morning, probably in that rising of the energies which comes with the brightness of the day, and told her that he was "unspeakably happy." "Christ has touched me. He has held me in His arms. I am changed—He has changed me. Never again can I be the same, for His power has cleansed me; I am a new man." "Then he looked at me yearningly," she adds, "and said, 'Do you understand?'" As he lay there dozing, smiling, with the look of this exaltation never leaving his face through the long last hours that followed, he was heard to hum and sing in snatches the hymn, "Safe in the arms of Jesus." Who knows where he had learnt it?—perhaps at some American "revival" or camp meeting, where the keen observer would catch up unawares and with a smile at himself the homely strain, which thus floated back to the memory of the dying the hymn of the humblest believer, the simplest certainty of a faith unencumbered with any new lights.

Lady Grant Duff has told me that when he lay in the last weakness, in the wintry noon of his dying day, his last words were for "more light": one wonders whether because the darkness was really gaining on him, or because of some wandering recollection in the confused musings of a mind shut up from all immediate influences, of the other great intelligence which is recorded in history to have made that piteous appeal. "His last conscious moment on Sunday," adds his wife, "was one of hope and effort lifewards." The actual end was complete and perfect peace. "He passed away as into a tranquil sleep, and woke four hours after in another world, or rather under another form, without having tasted death either physically or spiritually." Thus this extraordinary, varied, and noble life came to an end.

Sufficient time has now elapsed since then to permit a summary which it would have been difficult to make at the moment of one of the most interesting men of his time,—an embodiment in many ways at once of its eager movement, curiosities, and enthusiasm, and of its impatience with the conditions in which the social life of an almost extreme civilisation is cast. The central fact of his life, his renunciation of all that the world could give at a moment when everything seemed possible to him, in order that he might "live the life," and do something towards the bringing in of a higher state and purified ideal, will always remain the fact most interesting in it. Few are the men at any portion of the world's history who have been able to make such a sacrifice; and it does not detract from it that he was, at the moment of making it, filled with that disgust of the imperfections and falsehoods of society to which the idealist is prone: for he loved society while he hated it, and in every inclination and desire belonged to that world in which all that is most brilliant and beautiful is included with so much that is contemptible and base. He had no ascetic tendency, and esteemed honour and social elevation as much as any man, yet was ready, without a moment's hesitation, to throw them all from him for the sake of what seemed to him a better way. He loved variety, change, movement, the excitement of the new and unknown, yet accepted the monotony of dreary labour, the society of a narrow handful of undistinguished people, the obliteration of every hope, in a high ambition and fervent desire to ameliorate and purify the world. His teaching may not come to much among the many wandering voices which have echoed in the wilderness; but he himself is more than many books, or a world of sermons: and is perhaps in himself the lesson—at once of greatness and insufficiency, of the noble wisdom of the heart, and the limitations of human reason and power—which he had to teach to the world.

He gave up for what he believed to be the work of God everything that he had formerly thought most worth having in the world—renouncing all, not sadly or painfully, but with all the joyousness and cordial warmth of a nature full of sunshine. No idea of penance or voluntary humiliation was in his thoughts, as nothing more unlike an ascetic could be imagined than his life. He loved life, and enjoyed it, and was amused and interested by every detail of it, as much when he was following his mud-cart in the American wilds as when he was dining with princes or comparing experiences with statesmen. But to him it was the most simple and natural of impulses to throw aside whatever stood in the way of the work to which he believed God called him, and that without even a passing thought of merit in the renunciation. His sacrifices did not weigh upon his mind as they did upon ours. To us they seem unparalleled self-abnegation, to him the simplest necessity. Words are not sufficient to mark the singular contrast. The priests and martyrs of the old ages had even too much conscience of what they were doing, and never made light of the sacrifice; but the nineteenth century has this advantage over its predecessors which we call the ages of faith. It is all for materialism, for profit, for personal advantage—the most self-interested, the least ideal of ages. But when, here and there, a generous spirit, emancipated from these bonds, rises above the age, his sacrifice is no longer marked with gloom, or made into an operation of pain; it is a willing offering,—more than willing, unconsidered, lavish, gay, the joyous giving up, without a backward look or thought, of everything for the love of God—except the love of man, warmed and mellowed by the divine flame which, with no cloud of smoke or odour of burnt-offering, ascends clear and brilliant as light itself to the realms above.

Of such were both Laurence and Alice Oliphant—she, if possible, more fearless, less considerate of accessories and worldly consequences, than he, with that absolutism and superiority to restraining possibilities which belong to a woman. And yet, I think, complete as their self-sacrifice was, that they never lost a wholesome hold of life and its common laws until the supreme moment when they ascended into their mountain solitude, entered their chamber, and shut to their door, and attained to what they felt to be the climax of their existence, the final proof of all their theories and carrying out of their hopes, the strange mutual ecstacy of inspiration and composition which produced 'Sympneumata,'—that book so unlike either of them, so involved in diction, so wild and wandering in thought, as if two crystal springs had united to form a turbid and overshadowed pool. But neither of this does it become an outside and wondering spectator to speak. For this mystic work so strangely produced—the only child, as it were, of these two clear and elevated souls—has been a breathing of light and comfort to many, and carried to some aching hearts a consciousness of, and belief in, the world unseen, which other teachings have not sufficed to give. Such evidence in its favour is more than all the confused intellect, vainly trying to bring it to a human standard of reason, can say against it.

They lie separated by land and sea,—she in the little Friedhof at Haifa, among the friendly German folk, who still give a kind of worship to her dear and gracious name; he in the cemetery at Twickenham, on the edge of that greater world which so soon forgets, and makes so few pilgrimages. But the generation, not only of his contemporaries but of their children, must be exhausted indeed before the name of Laurence Oliphant will cease to conjure up memories of all that was most brilliant in intellect, most tender in heart, most trenchant in attack, most eager to succour in life. There has been no such bold satirist, no such cynic philosopher, no such devoted enthusiast, no adventurer so daring and gay, no religious teacher so absolute and visionary, in this Victorian age, now beginning to round towards its end, and which holds in its long and brilliant roll no more attractive and interesting name.

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